Creating a Community Mobilization Guide for Employment and Immigration Canada's "Stay In School Initiative"

by

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Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of City Planning

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- Radiology 0574
- Recreation 0575
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Home Economics 0386

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- Nuclear 0552
- Packaging 0549
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CREATING A COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION GUIDE FOR EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION CANADA'S "STAY IN SCHOOL INITIATIVE"

BY

COLLEEN SCHNEIDER

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF CITY PLANNING

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Abstract

This practicum involved the creation of a community mobilization guide entitled, *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*. It was commissioned by the Westarc Group of Brandon University as part of the federal government's efforts to help communities take on the dropout problem. The purpose of the guide was to provide background information on the dropout problem and a step by step plan for community mobilization to deal with the issue at the community level.

The planner's role was to develop a learning-centred and community-based consultation process for community action. Community members would be called upon to learn, to organize, to strategize, and to implement dropout prevention programs. Therefore, the planning approach developed for the project needed to incorporate flexibility and adaptability to specific stakeholders within the communities while at the same time be open to a great deal of experimentation, maximize social mobilization, and be self-supporting. The planning theories identified as most useful in maximizing social mobilization and enabling local self-sufficiency for the purpose of developing the guide were social learning and community development and mobilization.

The guide was developed using a framework that incorporated the six stages of community development and mobilization identified by Biddle and Biddle (1965: p.71) as the foundation for the action steps laid out for residents to organize and

mobilize around the dropout issue. This theoretical and methodological approach, while specifically develped for communities to mobilize around the school dropout issue, is a planning process that could also be used to address other community development issues requiring local social action.

The work carried out to develop this community mobilization guide was an example of social learning. The knowledge and experience that the author brought with her to the project's challenges was continually reshaped and enriched by the involvement and contributions of others, and, in the end, transformed into an action plan for communities.

Acknowledgements

Completing a Masters practicum can not be done without much help and support from many others. I would first like to recognize the important influence of Kent Gereke on my life's work with communities -- helping residents to first build themselves up and then begin the work of building up their communities. I would also like to thank Elizabeth Sweatman for her support and encouragement during the initial stages of getting it all down on paper.

For the opportunity of working on this Stay In School project, thanks go to the Westarc Group of Brandon University -- Joy Dornian, Robert Annis, and Bill Johnson. I would like to express my gratitude to committee members, Professor Mario Carvalho, Professor Geof Bargh, and my external advisor, Leo Prince, who gave their time and commitment to, what must sometimes feel like, a never ending process. I owe much to my advisor, Dr. Mary Ellen Tyler, who stepped into the process after it was well on its way and helped me excavate the theories and the intuitive thinking behind the work of developing the guide, and then turn it into a practicum.

For their participation and input during the development of *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*, I would like to extend thanks to Employment and Immigration Canada's Manitoba Regional Office, the Native Education Branch of the Department of Education, The Pas Indian Friendship Centre, Department of Education's Planning and Research Division, Frontier School Division, Manitoba

Youth Aboriginal Committee, existing Stay in School Committees, River East School Division's Student Support Services, Winnipeg School Division #1, Department of Education Student Support Branch, Pelly Trail School Division, Steinbach Regional Secondary School, Community Education Development Association, and the Logan Community Development Corporation.

I would like to thank Chris Schneider for assisting with the computer graphics work for this practicum, and Adrienne Whiteley and Mallory Neuman for their friendship and encouragement. This life's project could not have been completed if it were not for my life partner's love, belief in me, and constant help (dinners, formatting, you name it). Thank you Bertram.

I would like to dedicate this practicum to those high school students who have given up on school for the countless and significant reasons that young people do. It is my hope that they can find the courage, the support, and the love of learning that they need to stay in school, work towards their potential, and have meaningful lives.

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Diagrams

To define human nature in terms of needs is to define what we are in terms of what we lack, to insist on the distinctive emptiness and incompleteness of humans as a species...as natural creatures, we are potential only.

Michael Ignatieff

(*The Needs of Strangers*, 1984)

Chapter One: Introduction and the Nature of the Dropout Problem

1.1 Introduction

Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide was commissioned in 1992 as part of the Employment and Immigration Canada's efforts to have communities take on the responsibility of dealing with the dropout problem. The purpose of the guide was to enable communities to organize themselves to deal with the dropout situation in local schools. It was intended to provide background information on the dropout problem together with a step by step plan that community members could use to form action committees and develop strategies to address the dropout problem in their own communities. The development of the guide was undertaken as a practicum topic and completed under contract with the Westarc Group of Brandon University with funds from the Government of Canada's Stay In School Initiative.

While it might be argued that the turning over of the school dropout problem to communities is an example of government "downloading" its responsibilities to citizens, this action may in fact provide opportunities for communities across Canada to develop genuine local solutions to the dropout issue. In so doing, this process may stimulate a planning process which can help to regenerate community empowerment in dealing with local issues.

This practicum is divided into four chapters. The first chapter establishes the nature of the dropout problem. It describes how the guide's author became involved in the project and lays out the terms of reference developed by the Westarc Group. The second chapter describes how the guide was created by operationalizing the terms of reference. Chapter three provides an overview of *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*, explaining the nature of the guide and its contents. The entire published version of the guide appears as an appendix of this practicum. The fourth and final chapter is a reflection of how the author approached the development of the guide. It provides some insight into how the planning theories -- specifically community mobilization and social learning -- guided the author.

The Westarc Group's decision to contract the development of the mobilization guide to a planning student was made for a number of reasons. The problem posed -- developing a guide for community action -- involved understanding the dynamics of how a community can be organized to respond to a social or economic issue that it feel needs to be addressed. This understanding necessitates an awareness of community dynamics (social and political forces acting within the community) and of all the possible manners in which change can occur within communities. As such, an understanding of planning was viewed as a priority in assisting communities to respond to the dropout problem.

Several planning issues arose during the creation of the guide, such as: What links need to be made and explored between planning and voluntarism and adult education? What

skills should planners develop in order to work with volunteers and help to increase their skills and knowledge in planning? How can planners work to include the marginalized members of a community in the planning and mobilizing process? These issues will be discussed throughout the practicum, most specifically in Chapter Four.

1.2 Rationale: The Nature of the Dropout Problem

While students have been dropping out of school for as long as schools have existed, it only recently became a priority issue for the Canadian government in 1990. This happened at a time when the very essence of our educational system was being put into question: Why were too many students either drifting through schools, that failed to teach them to read or write well, or dropping out altogether? The rate of students leaving school before graduating was 30% in 1990. Students, parents, and teachers seemed to be becoming disillusioned with their educational system. At the same time, Canadian high school students were ranking poorly in international math and science examinations and businesses were critical of schools that were not adequately preparing young people for employment.[1] This got the attention of federal, provincial and territorial governments.

Our educational system was becoming an embarrassment to us all. Not only was it shameful, but it was costly. Costly to the 100,000 dropouts per year who, in leaving school, would lose the chance to live more fulfilling and comfortable lives. It would also

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[1]Employment and Immigration Canada, *A National Stay In School Initiative*, (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1990), p.8.

be costly to our social welfare system.[2]

Young people were dropping out of school for a variety of reasons. These included personal and family problems, lack of parental support or belief in the importance of an education, and boredom. Many did not see the connection between what was taught in school and the skills they needed for employment. Some had experienced racial conflicts and increasing violence in school.[3]

The governmental response to this educational crisis was two-fold.

Firstly, commissions were appointed by provincial and territorial Departments of Education in the early 1990's. Their job was to review how well elementary and high school was being taught in their respective provinces and territories. Secondly, in 1990 the federal government's Department of Employment and Immigration legislated the *Stay In School Initiative*, a five year program to tackle the dropout issue. This federal initiative would cost the government $296.4 million. The program was aimed at decreasing the number of high school students who were dropping out of school in Canada. A major component of the initiative involved encouraging communities to mobilize and tackle the dropout problem at the community level. Communities would get

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[2]Tom Fennell, "What's Wrong at School?", *Macleans*, (106 no.2, January 11, 1993), p.28.

[3]Statistics Canada, *Leaving School: Results from a National Survey Comparing School Leavers and High School Graduates 18 to 20 years of age*, (Ottawa: Human Resources and Labour Canada, 1993), p.27.

schools, businesses; and local organizations working together to form partnerships in order to address the dropout issue. The government was placing the responsibility on communities to mobilize themselves and implement programs to prevent students from dropping out and to provide alternative educational programs to assist dropouts in going back to school and completing high school.

1.2.1 A Dropout Crisis?

The thirty percent dropout rate was perceived by the federal government as an unacceptable loss of human potential which created higher social welfare costs and a serious deficit in the supply of skills needed to expand employment, productivity, and incomes for all Canadians. This rate had been reached by calculating the difference between the number of students who entered high school and the number from that same year that graduated with their grade 12 class three or four years later (grade 13 in Ontario). It illustrated that the range in the dropout rates between the provinces went from 17% in New Brunswick to 40% in Alberta.

Table 1-1 **High School non-completion rates (%), Canada and the provinces 1988-89 and 1989-90.**

	1988-89	1989-90
Canada	**33%**	**31%**
Newfoundland	36%	33%
P.E.I.	25%	24%
Nova Scotia	31%	30%
New Brunswick	22%	17%
Quebec	36%	36%
Ontario	30%	26%
Manitoba	28%	27%
Saskatchewan	26%	25%
Alberta	39%	40%
B.C.	37%	36%

From: Statistics Canada, *Leaving School: Results from a National Survey Comparing School Leavers and High School Graduates 18 to 20 years of age,* (Ottawa: Human Resources and Labour Canada, 1993), p.10.

The approach dealt exclusively with regular daytime high school dropouts or non-completers. It did not take into consideration those students who left early but then returned and completed high school in evening classes or in alternative class formats. Nor did this approach accommodate interprovincial migration or analysis by demographic or background variables.[4] This could help explain why those provinces which have the most stable populations, like New Brunswick, have lower dropout rates than those provinces, like Alberta, which experience much fluctuation in their

[4]Statistics Canada, *Leaving School: Results from a National Survey Comparing School Leavers and High School Graduates 18 to 20 years of age,* (Ottawa: Human Resources and Labour Canada, 1993), p.10.

population base. The year to year changes in the dropout rate may also be more indicative of changes in record keeping processes than changes in student behaviour.

Employment and Immigration Canada commissioned Statistics Canada to conduct a "School Leavers Survey" to estimate the extent of the dropout problem and to identify the circumstances associated with dropping out. In June of 1993 their report was released with an updated national drop-out rate of only 18%, showing that the original estimated rate of 30% had been too pessimistic.

The *School Leavers Survey* took into account those students who had transferred to other schools or who had returned later to complete high school. Statistics Canada used the Family Allowance files as the sampling frame, a stratified random sample of 18,000 18 to 20 year olds was selected.[5] A computer assisted telephone interview was administered from April to June 1991. This interview obtained demographic and background information, school experience, and post-school labour market and other measures. It identified whether respondents were in school, had graduated, or had left before graduating. The resulting 18% dropout rate, calculated by this more accurate method, was 45% lower than the 1990 projection of 30%.

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[5]Statistics Canada, 1993, p.1.

Table 1-2 **Dropout pool estimates for 20 year-olds based on 1991 Census data, for Canada and the provinces**

	% of 20 year-olds without further training	% 20 year-olds total
Canada	**18%**	**21%**
Newfoundland	25%	29%
P.E.I.	21%	24%
Nova Scotia	21%	26%
New Brunswick	20%	22%
Quebec	18%	23%
Ontario	15%	16%
Manitoba	24%	26%
Saskatchewan	22%	26%
Alberta	23%	26%
B.C.	19%	22%

From: Statistics Canada, *Leaving School: Results from a National Survey Comparing School Leavers and High School Graduates 18 to 20 years of age,* (Ottawa: Human Resources and Labour Canada, 1993), p.13.

1.2.2 Why do students drop out of school?

Young people do not decide to drop out of school overnight. It is a gradual process that can begin when they are very young -- even as early as elementary school. They literally "fade out" of school. Students who leave school come from all neighbourhoods, all socio-economic backgrounds, all cultures. Leavers are more likely than graduates to: report that they did not enjoy school; express dissatisfaction with their courses and school rules; have problems with their teachers; not participate in extra-curricular activities; participate less in classes than other students; have friends not attending school; have friends who did not consider high school

completion important; not fit in at school; and, skip classes.[6]

These school experiences seemed to figure quite prominently in a student's decision to leave school. School-related factors were cited as the most important reason for quitting by 41% of the female and 40% of the male dropouts. Work-related considerations influenced male students (38%) more than female students (16%). While personal or family reasons influenced female students more -- 25% compared to 10%. Personal/family reasons include pregnancy and marriage, drug and alcohol problems, problems at home, and sickness or medical conditions.

The following is a summary of the factors which contribute to students dropping out of school. The information was obtained from a Statistics Canada survey entitled, *Leaving School*, together with research and interviews conducted during the research phase of the development of the mobilization guide.

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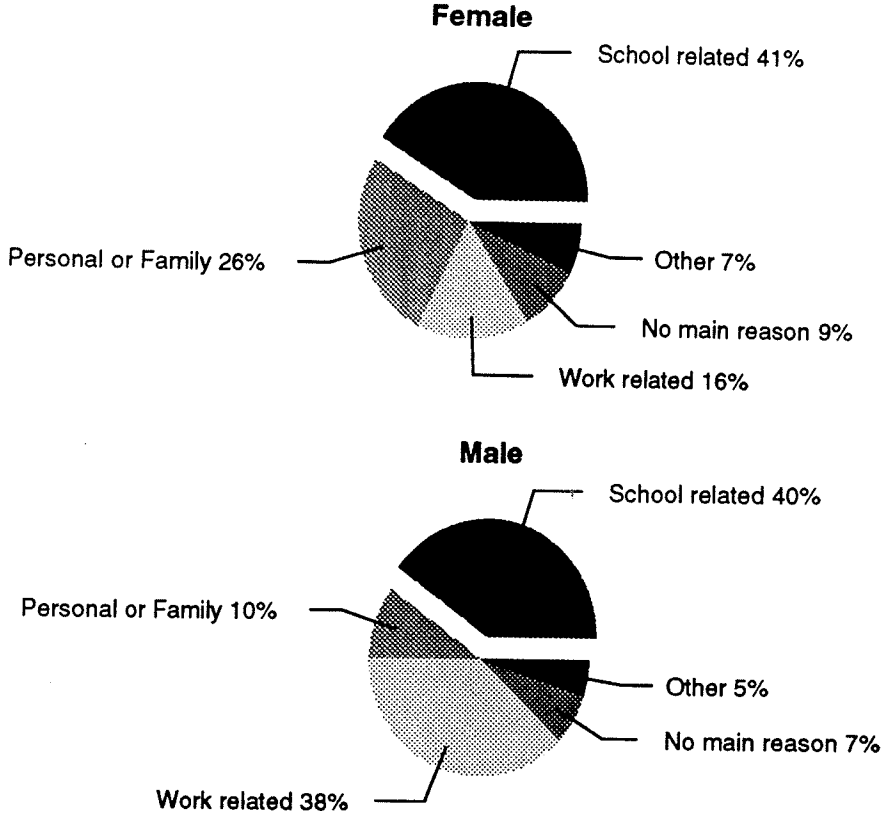
[6]Statistics Canada, 1993, p.2.

Table 1-3 Most Important Reasons for Leaving by Category



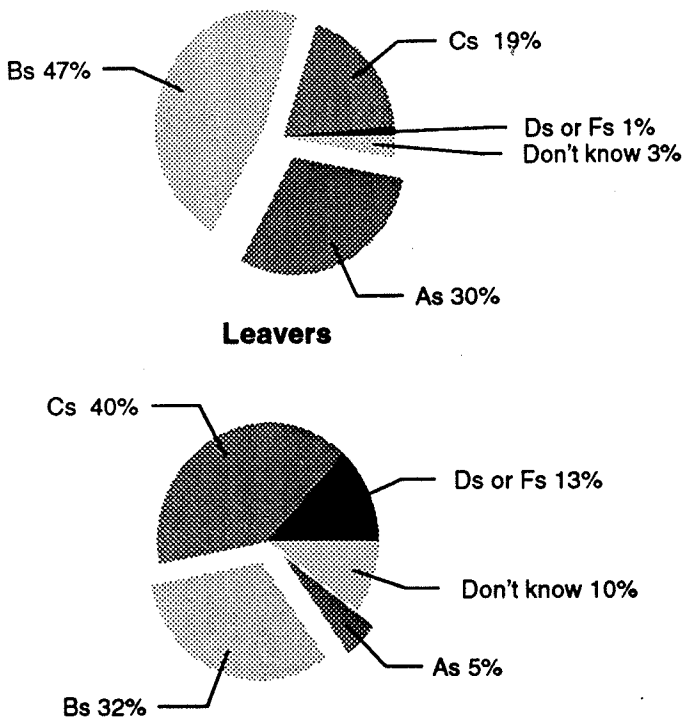
From: Statistics Canada, *Leaving School: Results from a National Survey Comparing School Leavers and High School Graduates 18 to 20 years of age,* (Ottawa: Human Resources and Labour Canada, 1993), p.27.

School-related Reasons

Many students drop out because they are bored with school, they are failing, they do not fit in, or they have skipped or missed a lot of school. Frequently, they do not get along with their teachers. Many students who leave school feel rejected by the educational system and react in turn by rejecting it. Often, they do not see the importance and value of completing high school or the connection between what they are learning at school and employment opportunities.

Academic performance is a key variable in the school leaving process. A good proportion (53%) of students who left school before graduating had lower grades (C's, D's, and F's) and found school more difficult than graduates. A higher proportion of leavers than graduates had failed an elementary grade.

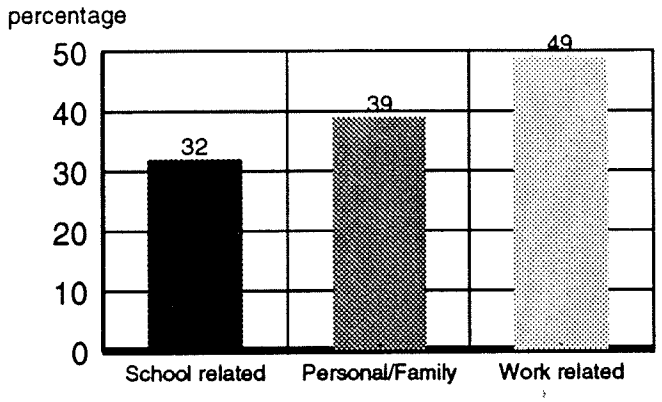
Table 1-4 **Grade averages before leaving school.**



From: Statistics Canada, *Leaving School: Results from a National Survey Comparing School Leavers and High School Graduates 18 to 20 years of age,* (Ottawa: Human Resources and Labour Canada, 1993), p.35.

A number of students (37%) who dropped out of school had achieved grade averages of B and A. For these students, the reasons for leaving school had to do more with personal issues than academic ones -- 49% of them gave personal or family-related reasons for leaving school.

Table 1-5 **Leavers with A or B grade averages by most important reason for leaving school.**



From: Statistics Canada, *Leaving School: Results from a National Survey Comparing School Leavers and High School Graduates 18 to 20 years of age,* (Ottawa: Human Resources and Labour Canada, 1993), p.35.

The factors involved in the student leaving process are much more complex than simply, "low achievement = school departure". These factors include family structure, marital status, family responsibilities, parents' education and occupation, if they live in urban or rural areas, and whether or not they have physical disabilities.

Family Stability

Family stability was a factor in the school leaving process. Those students who had stable environments at home were more likely to complete school than those who did not. Those students who had household responsibilities, most notably child care, who were married and/or had dependent children, were much more likely to drop out of school than other students. The number of family moves which force students to

change schools, often in the middle of the school year, can also affect their decision to drop out.

Parental Attitude Towards Education and Socio-Economic Background

Parents' attitudes towards education and the importance of completing high school also played significant roles in the leaving school process. The *School Leavers Survey* found that almost half (49%) of students who said their parents did not consider high school completion very important, were leavers, while only 14% of those who said their parents valued high school completion, dropped out of school.[7] School leavers were more likely than graduates to have parents with relatively little formal education and who were employed in the blue collar field.

Rural vs Urban

There are slightly higher rates of dropouts in rural areas than in urban areas. Rural students' reasons for leaving school include problems related to the distance they have to travel to get to school. Pressures to join their families on the farm also influence some young people in rural areas to drop out. Others complain of the lack of choice in schools and programs. There are few programs available for those students who require a different teaching approach or some assistance in order to succeed in the classroom.

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[7]Statistics Canada, 1993, p.20.

Disabilities

Students with disabilities are more likely to drop out of school than those without. Many find school to be an alienating and difficult experience.

Drug and Alcohol Use

While a majority of students, both dropouts and graduates, consume alcohol to some degree during their last year of school, dropouts are more likely than graduates to engage in the regular use of alcohol as well as soft and hard drugs. Not surprisingly, some of this behaviour leads to other criminal activities, and leavers are more likely to be criminally convicted than graduates.

Aboriginal Dropouts

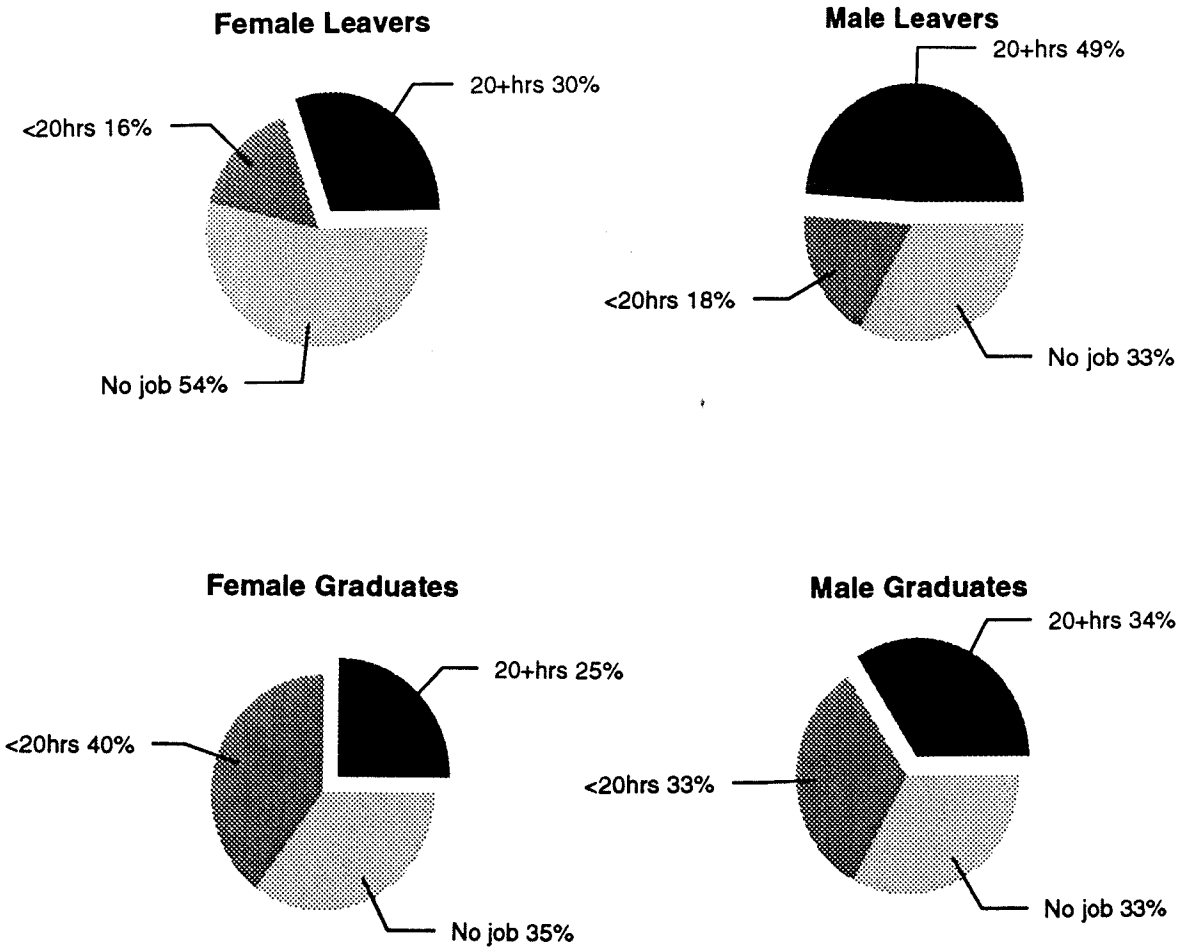
Drop-out rates are particularly high for Aboriginal students - as high as 70% in some areas. Many Aboriginal and Metis students feel that racism - both in terms of racial incidents and racism within the educational system - affects their decision to drop out of school. In many instances, they see a conflict between their own culture and the dominant culture in the school and as a result may feel that what they are learning is not always relevant to them. In addition, the limited number of Aboriginal teachers and counsellors who can act as role models make it difficult for students to feel that they are a valuable part of the educational system and to set goals for themselves.

Many young Aboriginal and Metis people leave high school because they must make money in order to look after themselves. Conditions on the reserve make many young people despondent. Leaving the reserve may not seem to be an option because they do not feel welcomed by the outside world. Those aboriginal students who must leave home in order to attend high school find it difficult and lonely. Often, they have to move from their reserve or home town to a city whose cultures and values are foreign to them. For many, it is more than cultural differences that isolate them from their non-Aboriginal classmates and teachers. They also sense that a difference in personal and financial status sets them apart as well. Aboriginal people with grade 12 are almost twice as likely to find employment as those who dropped out before graduating.

Part time Employment

Having a part time job seems to greatly influence the school leaving process. Part time jobs can draw students away from school. They may gain a sense of independence from working that they do not get in school. Students who work more than 15 hours a week are more likely to drop out, especially if they are also having negative experiences at school. For those students who have positive school experiences and work part time, part time work can be a positive experience. Limited work can increase a person's self-esteem and can help students develop positive work habits.

Table 1-6 **Part-time employment of leavers and graduates by gender.**



From: Statistics Canada, *Leaving School: Results from a National Survey Comparing School Leavers and High School Graduates 18 to 20 years of age,* (Ottawa: Human Resources and Labour Canada, 1993), p.41.

Students who are at risk of dropping out

When a high school student has a number of the "dropout" characteristics they are considered to be at risk of leaving school. Several key factors, all of which have a significant effect on the dropout rate, can be used to identify high, medium, and low risk groups: family structure; marital status; dependent children; disability; and parental education and occupation.[8] In the *School Leavers Survey*, the majority of students who dropped out of school (69%) came from the high risk group -- lone parent or no parent families and had family responsibilities of their own (married or had dependent children). The high risk group also contains those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those with disabilities.

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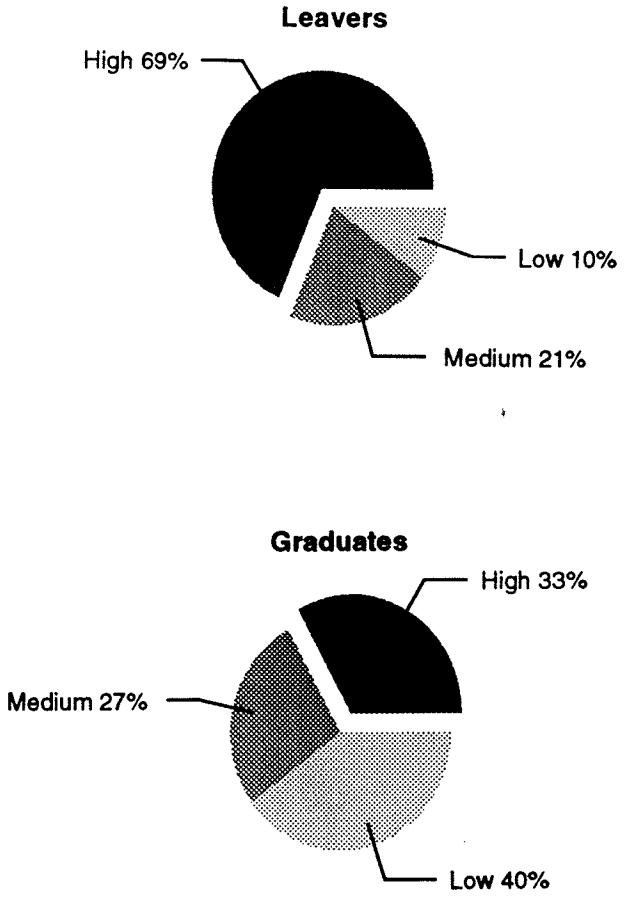
[8]Statistics Canada, 1993, p.23.

Table 1-7 **Risk groups.**



From: Statistics Canada, *Leaving School: Results from a National Survey Comparing School Leavers and High School Graduates 18 to 20 years of age,* (Ottawa: Human Resources and Labour Canada, 1993), p.24.

There are a number of positive factors which have been shown to influence at risk students to complete high school. One-third of the graduates interviewed in the *School Leavers Study* were in the high risk group. These positive factors included:

healthy parental attitude towards school; school environment; programs to keep young people in school; good teachers; good role models; and individual initiative; determination; and motivation. A positive school environment can counter-balance the impact of being from a high risk background.[9]

1.2.3 The Effect of the Dropout Situation -- On Young People and their Communities

Young people who drop out of school, leave more than their class mates behind them -- they leave opportunities for jobs which may be more fulfilling, better paying, and more secure. In a competitive job market with soaring unemployment rates, people that do not have the minimum of a high school diploma can not compete with those who have a university or college education who are also looking for work. In the next ten years almost two-thirds of all new jobs created will require more than 12 years of education and half of these jobs will demand at least five years of education and training beyond the completion of grade twelve. When and if they eventually find work, a dropout will earn one-quarter less income than their classmates who graduated from high school.[10]

Leaving school early can have a dramatic effect on the ability of young people to have dreams, to pursue goals, and to believe in themselves. While dropping out of school

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[9]Statistics Canada, 1993, p.23.

[10]Minister of State for Youth, *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*, (Winnipeg: Programs and Services, Employment and Immigration, Manitoba Region, 1993), p.4.

may have seemed like the perfect escape from all of the extra problems and hassles associated with school, for dropouts, this "escape" can become a life time sentence to a string of unrewarding, underpaid jobs or a dependency on the social welfare system -- both of which strip people of their dignity and sense of well-being. The life of a dropout is more likely to be one of poverty, illiteracy, drugs, and crime. The loss of human potential is staggering.

The government of Canada paints the dropout problem as an economic issue which effects the future economic well-being of the entire nation. Dropouts are costly to the social welfare system because they are much more likely to require social assistance and other costly employment training programs in order to become self-sufficient. They are also more likely to end up in our prison systems than high school graduates. The office of the Minister of State for Youth determined that is was costing Canadian taxpayers $4 billion over the working lifetime of the 137,000 young people who dropped out before 1989 alone.[11]

The consequences of the dropout problem are shocking, not only in human and social terms, but also for the future productivity and competitiveness of the Canadian economy. Employment and Immigration calculated that by the year 2000, if the dropout situation continued without any intervention, there will be one million under-educated, untrained youth who would be trying to enter a labour market that will not

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[11]Pierre Cadieux, Press Release, (Ottawa: Ministry of State for Youth, September 1992), p.1.

want them.[12] The federal government felt that the future productivity of the Canadian economy was at state. How will Canada be able to compete on the global market with under-educated and under-skilled workers? As Canadian industry is undergoing a shift to new technologies, there is an ever-increasing need for a highly skilled workforce. If left unattended, the dropout trend would leave Canada with a large percentage of the workforce that is functionally illiterate and lacking the basic skills needed for effective job training and skills development.

The economic and social ramifications of the dropout issue for individuals, communities, and the country are immense. But the dropout issue is not just jobs-related; it is not merely an economic loss. It is damaging to the social infrastructure, to the whole and healthy development of human beings, and puts the future of communities in jeopardy. Young people who dropped out of school could have been their community's future leaders, writers, entrepreneurs, and artists. Communities lose out when their young people are not able to lead purposeful, creative, and fulfilling lives.

The purpose of education is more than to provide the Canadian economy with a skilled and educated workforce. Our ability to learn defines us as human beings. When young people turn their backs on formal education, they lose one of life's largest opportunities for learning and many of the tools they need to continue the

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[12]*Helping Kids Stay in School*, 1993, p.4.

learning process throughout their lives. Without it life loses much of its meaning.

1.3 The Stay In School Initiative

The Stay In School Initiative was the policy response of the federal government in 1990 to the perceived 30% student dropout rate. Because of their "primary role in general economic direction, labour market policies and programs, and some aspects of the social welfare system", they felt that is was "appropriate and necessary" for the federal government to assume leadership in finding solutions to the dropout problem.[13] "Since entry to the labour market and education are intimately linked, it is crucial that (the federal government) develop strong partnerships with provincial education ministries, as well as with school boards and other providers of education and training at the community level."[14]

The Minister of the State for Youth through the Ministry of Employment and Immigration began administering funds to programs and initiatives that encouraged young people to "stay in school". A total of $296.4 million was allocated over the five year life span of the initiative. It was hoped that the "Stay In School" Initiative would bring Canada's best knowledge and expertise to bear on an issue that was felt to have grave socio-economic implications for the country's future.

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[13]Employment and Immigration Canada, *A National Stay In School Initiative*, (Ottawa: Min. of Supply and Services, 1990), p.8.

[14]Employment and Immigration Canada, 1990, p.8.

The objectives behind "Stay In School" were: to help motivate young people to finish school and prepare them for the labour market; to create a cooperative environment in which provincial governments and agencies, schools, business, labour, community groups, parents and young people could join together in an effort to reduce the dropout rate; and, to enhance and assist the educational system. It was hoped that this initiative would work to reduce illiteracy, help disadvantaged youth get into the mainstream, reinforce private sector training, and reduce unemployment and welfare costs. These were high aspirations for a short term initiative with such a comparatively small budget.

The Stay In School Initiative would address the dropout problem on three "fronts". Firstly, existing employment and training programs and services that worked towards reducing the dropout rate would be expanded and new ones would be developed. Secondly, stakeholders or "partners" which consisted of governments, business, labour, teachers, parents, social agencies, and youth would be mobilized to work together cooperatively to address the factors that lead students to leave school early and establish programs to keep kids in school. And thirdly, through an extensive and expensive advertising campaign, youth, parents, and the public would be better informed about the realities of the labour market and the dangers inherent in dropping out.[15]

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[15]Employment and Immigration Canada, 1990, p.9.

The Stay In School budget directed more than half ($166.3 million) of the $296.4 million budget towards employment, training, and dropout prevention programs and services. More than a quarter ($76.6 million) was allocated to mobilizing partners, and the remaining $53.5 million was used for raising public awareness about the dropout problem.[16]

The project to develop "Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide" fell under the second area of the Stay In School Initiative with the goal of mobilizing partners or stakeholders in communities to address the dropout problem. This part of the initiative involved the encouragement of national and local consultations to stimulate dialogue, exchange information and develop solutions to the dropout problem. It was hoped that the guide created for the Stay In School Initiative would provide suggestions and direction to communities about mobilizing partners and tools to assist in the recruitment of volunteers for Stay In School committees and dropout prevention programs.

1.4 Community-based Solutions to the Dropout Problem

It was intended that the Stay In School Initiative be based upon community-driven initiative, responsibility and action. It was the federal government's hope that by assembling education, business, social services, and planning professionals to tackle the dropout problem on a number of different fronts that some positive impact would

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[16]Employment and Immigration Canada, 1990, p.14.

be made and the dropout trend would be reversed. While the federal government took responsibility for directing funds, and increasing awareness about the dropout issue through an aggressive advertising campaign, they turned the responsibility of the actual mobilization and implementation of community-based programs over to the communities themselves. The government felt that the solution to the dropout problem lay in communities across Canada because they had the most to gain or lose when it came to the dropout issue. Communities were most affected by the impact of a high dropout rate and would benefit from a better educated, better trained, and more employable population.

1.4.1 Schools and Communities Working Together

Stay In School committees would have to find volunteers, resources in their communities, and receive business sponsors for their own initiatives and programs. They would have the power to define, analyze, and address the dropout issue in their own neighbourhoods. Individuals would be responsible to take the initiative, to assemble their own Stay In School teams, to work cooperatively with their local school(s), and to take ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of programs.

Schools are an integral part of the community and must be a major player in solving the dropout issue. The history of the relationship between schools and the communities they resided in was often non-existent, and sometimes confrontational. There was a feeling of territoriality. Anything to do with education was the exclusive

domain of the school, and the larger community had no role to play.[17] At the same time, schools resisted becoming actively involved in solving the communities' social problems that were effecting their students.

Schools have now begun to realize that it is no longer feasible to be territorial in the delivery of services. The needs of students and families today are such that boundaries become blurred and it is no longer as easy to say "this is my responsibility and that is yours".[18] Problems facing students and families are community problems that require community solutions. Recognizing this collective responsibility, the most viable course of action requires the cooperation, collaboration, and commitment of all partners: schools, communities, families, businesses, government, and local organizations.

1.4.2 Examples of Community Partnerships

Individuals, stakeholder committees, and entire communities have come up with responses to the drop-out issue that have been creative and appropriate for their communities. These programs drew on businesses, volunteers, and community organizations. Here are two examples of how community partnerships have worked to address the dropout issue in Manitoba:

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[17]Alberta Education Response Centre, *Schools and Communities: A Necessary Partnership*, (Edmonton: Alberta Education, 1991), p.1.

[18]Alberta Education Response Centre, p.1.

In Dauphin, the Parklands School Division, Frontier Native Friendship Centres, West Region Tribal Council, Manitoba Metis Federation, and Native Education Branch of Dauphin came together in a joint effort to address the needs of Aboriginal students who were at risk of dropping out. They established a Parental Support Counselling program. This was paired with programs which helped to identify and reach at-risk students. The program helped parents of at-risk youth become more involved and supportive of their children's education.[19]

The Turtle Mountain School Division in Boissevein established a mentorship program in conjunction with their local Chamber of Commerce. The mentorship program involved business or community members being paired with at-risk students. They helped these students with their school work and participated in social and recreational activities with them.[20]

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[19]Minister of State for Youth, Helping Kids Stay in School: A Community Guide, (Brandon: Employment and Immigration Canada, 1993).

[20]*Helping Kids Stay In School*, 1993.

Chapter Two: Terms of Reference and Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will explain how the project for Westarc Group -- the creation of a guide for communities to address the dropout problem -- was approached and how the terms of reference for the project were operationalized.

The method of approach taken to develop *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide* involved: carrying out background research on the dropout issue and community mobilization; consulting with teachers, community organizers, principals, counsellors, Stay In School committee members, and Employment and Immigration senior bureaucrats; writing a draft of the handbook; testing the draft; revising the draft; and presenting a final version to Employment and Immigration. The contract with Westarc Group Inc. consisted of completing all of these project steps. The guide was presented to Canada Employment and Immigration, and was printed and distributed across Manitoba in the spring of 1993.

2.2 Terms of Reference

This practicum was carried out in collaboration with The Westarc Group. The Westarc Group is a consultant group which is affiliated with Brandon University and provides community economic development services. Westarc began working on the Stay In School Initiative, on contract with Canada Employment and Immigration, in

early 1991. Their Stay In School project, "Introducing Stay In School to Southern Manitoba" heightened awareness of the dropout problem, brought together appropriate persons and organizations who could work on the resolving the dropout problem, and helped them to begin working on the dropout problem in their communities. Westarc worked with six small town communities and helped them to identify and recruit stakeholders. Stakeholders are a group defined as being those members of a community who have a stake in keeping kids in school.

It was through the implementation of this project that the idea for developing a guide for communities came about. Westarc noted that interested stakeholders in all parts of the province were anxious, not only for ideas and suggestions for possible dropout prevention projects, but also for suggestions on how to mobilize other stakeholders.[21]

The Stay In School Initiative was based upon community-driven initiative, responsibility and action. As such, Westarc felt that it would be useful to make tools available to stakeholders to assist in the encouragement and recruitment of community members. These tools would include the development of a mobilization guide for stakeholders. It would assist community stakeholders in the organizing of Stay In School committees to develop programs and projects which address the dropout issue. The opportunity for this author's involvement arose as a result of her experience

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[21]Westarc Group Inc., *Introducing Stay In School to Southern Manitoba*, (Brandon: Westarc Group Inc.), p.1.

developing publications which were learning-centred and her educational and professional background in community planning and community development.

The guide would be developed primarily for a Manitoba audience, addressing the diverse nature of the population -- rural and urban, aboriginal and multicultural populations. The mobilization strategy that was developed was targeted to experienced and dedicated community volunteers working in the areas of youth, education, and employment and training. This could include anyone who has a stake in keeping young people in school -- business people, school boards, trade unions, youth serving agencies, community service groups, parents, students, and counsellors. They were considered to be the stakeholders -- having a stake in the outcome of the dropout problem. These volunteers played leadership roles in their communities and as such would be able to mobilize others into taking collective action on the dropout problem in their community.

The terms of reference as developed by the Westarc Group in consultation with Employment and Immigration Canada. They provided the boundaries for the process of creating the guide and for the contents of the guide itself. The terms of reference laid out by the Westarc Group included the following:

- a general description of the dropout situation and its effects on one's community;
- a definition of stakeholders and identification of potential stakeholders;

- information on recruiting stakeholders;
- information on assessing the dropout situation in one's particular community;
- information on planning for action -- how to develop strategies to address the dropout situation and examples of dropout prevention programs already in place;
- a discussion of barriers to stakeholder participation and suggestions on how to overcome them;
- information on strategic planning, short term and long term goal setting, evaluating successes;
- a checklist to follow for the organization of a stakeholder meeting, a sample agenda, and questions for group discussion;
- information on conducting a better meeting and a checklist, and;
- a list of resources available in Manitoba.

In order to make the mobilization guide as accessible as possible, it was decided that it should be written in plain language, be attractive, and easy to use. Plain language targets a reading level of grade nine.

2.3 Research and Consultation on the Dropout Issue

At the outset of the project, the author consulted with the Westarc Group to review the terms of reference, project assumptions, the work plan, the background on the origins of the project, the format, the budget, and the purpose and rationale for developing the guide. During this meeting, the author's role, roles of other Westarc staff, and a time line for the project were established. Potential concerns were also discussed. For example, it had been found that schools were receptive to the idea of

working on the dropout issue in cooperation with their communities. However, when it came to practice, they tended to resist. While many school administrators saw it as an opportunity to foster communication with the community, others saw involving community in school affairs as extra work they did not want to undertake. Another concern was that community members were not well versed in the student dropout situation and it was found that many school divisions were not keeping any records on the numbers of dropouts. These were some of the concerns that needed to be addressed in both the process of developing the guide and in the contents of the guide itself. For example, the consultation process needed to pay special attention to the concerns and ideas of school teachers, volunteers, and administrators regarding collaboration with the community.

Westarc Group supplied materials already developed for the Stay In School Initiative which included a resource kit for teachers, statistics on the dropout issue from across Canada, and research and work that Westarc Group had done through the organization of Stay In School committees around south western Manitoba.

The terms of reference for the project specified that the guide should contain a general description of the dropout situation and its effects on communities, information on assessing the dropout situation in one's own community, ideas for developing strategies to address the dropout problem, and examples of programs already in place. Therefore, library research was conducted to gather information and

consultations were held with individuals working on developing programs and strategies to deal with the dropout problem. In designing the research and consultation phase of the project, special attention was paid to ensuring that the information collected would be representative and meet the needs of all of the target groups identified in the terms of reference.

2.3.1 Research

Research was conducted at the Manitoba Department of Education Library, University of Manitoba Faculty of Education Library, Centennial Library, and University of Winnipeg Library. Lists of books were developed and specific books were reviewed on the dropout issue, reforming the educational system, board development, voluntarism, and adult education (how adults learn and how to create materials for an adult audience). This research provided an overview of the nature of the dropout problem, and placed the work in the context of the history of the dropout problem and of the reforms made over time in the educational system. It also provided the opportunity to collect concrete information, including statistics on the dropout issue and board development strategies, which would form part of the guide.

2.3.2 Consultations

Consultations were conducted simultaneously to library research with educational specialists who worked with urban, rural, and native education systems and communities and who were familiar with the dropout issue. The Westarc Group

provided a list of key informants who were to be contacted and interviewed as part of the research and consultation phase of the project. These key informants were experts on urban, rural, and native educational issues. Speaking to experts who were working in the field, helped to ground the research. It also served to confirm some of the theories found in written materials, and exposed other research as being less relevant to Manitoba. Most valuable were the interviews with experts in native education as there was little information available on the experiences of native students in the context of the dropout situation.

The key informants supplied by the Westarc Group also provided additional contacts. In the end, representatives were interviewed from: Employment and Immigration Canada's Manitoba Regional Office; the Native Education Branch of the Department of Education in Dauphin and Winnipeg; The Pas Indian Friendship Centre; the Department of Education's Planning and Research Division; Frontier School Division; Manitoba Youth Aboriginal Committee; existing Stay in School committees; River East School Division's Student Support Services; Winnipeg School Division #1; Manitoba Department of Education Student Support Branch; Canada Employment Centre Program Officers for the Stay in School Initiative from Manitoba, Ontario, British Columbia, and New Brunswick; Pelly Trail School Division; Steinbach Regional Secondary School; Plurielle; Community Education Development Association; and the Logan Community Development Corporation.

2.3.3 Literature Review

A literature review was carried out on the theories of social learning, transformative planning, popular education, community development, and community mobilization, as part of the practicum research phase. This served to assist the development of the mobilization strategy that was utilized in the guide. The literature reviewed explored the physical and social scope of "community", the crises affecting urban and rural areas, and how to mobilize people in order to address the social and economic issues in their communities.

Practical and creative activities for planning and mobilizing communities were found in the literature and used in creating the guide. Problems that community planners and organizers had encountered in mobilizing communities was also important information that was used in developing the guide.

The literature review examined works by: Canadian rural and urban planners, Alex Sim, Henri Lamoureaux et al, Joan Neuman Kuyek, and Peter Overlander; American planner John Friedmann; American community development specialists William and Loureide Biddle, and Virginia Coover; American psychologist and community activist Scott Peck; British community development specialists T.R. Batten, Christopher Benninger; and Brazilian education and community activist Paulo Freire.

2.4 Creating the Guide

Creating the guide involved developing an outline which was then approved by the Westarc Group, deciding on the format, and choosing which information to include from the research and consultation phase.

In consultation with Westarc Group, a detailed outline of the guide was developed. The outline was developed through a process of reviewing the terms of reference for the project and determining how to organize the contents of the guide in the most logical way. For example, the terms of reference indicated that information on planning for action, developing strategies to address the dropout problem, and short term and long term goal setting be included in the guide. It made sense to include these concepts together in a section entitled "Planning for Action".

The basic outline was then reviewed by Westarc's project team to ensure that it was in keeping with the overall goals of the guide and addressed the terms of reference. Based on the discussion, some revisions were made to the outline.

The next step in creating the guide was to develop the format. One of the terms of reference stated that the guide be easily accessible. It was therefore decided that the format include a mixture of short paragraphs with sub-headings and the use of bullets to list points. This was approved by the Westarc Group and the actual writing of the guide followed.

In the writing of the guide, decisions had to be made as to which of the researched information was to be included. Information which was specific to the terms of reference was a priority. Examples of real situations and relevant statistics were also a priority because they helped illustrate the guide's major concepts. For example, in the section "What Can Your Community Do About the Dropout Situation?" practical ideas for individual, committee, and community involvement were included from real life situations. Another consideration in deciding what information was included and what was to be left out was that the guide was supposed to be relatively short, succinct, and non-intimidating.

The first draft of the guide was written and the Westarc Group provided initial feedback regarding its contents and whether or not the terms of reference had been addressed. Included in their feedback at this stage of the project was that the guide should go further in stressing the importance of using the media throughout the stages of mobilization. The Westarc Group also requested that the guide include comparative incomes of graduates to dropouts, signs of students at-risk of dropping out, and a time-line for the work of an action committee. They also asked that the guide stress early intervention and the importance of having young people involved in the action committees. Finally, the draft was reviewed in terms of the plain language requirements that had been identified in the terms of reference. Grammatical changes were requested where sentences were too long and complicated and vocabulary was too difficult. Using the Federal Government's guide, "Words that Count Women In",

the draft was also reviewed for appropriate, gender neutral and ethnically sensitive terminology.

2.5 Document Testing and Feedback

The draft was re-written according to the feedback received in this phase. The Westarc Group reviewed the second draft of the guide to ensure that their comments and concerns had been addressed. The second draft was accepted, and then distributed. The guide was then distributed to educational, training and employment, and community development specialists for their feedback.

The draft edition was distributed to twelve different individuals for their suggestions and feedback. This draft testing phase of the project allowed for input from rural and urban educators and community development facilitators, Canada Employment and Immigration program staff, an educational psychologist, aboriginal education specialists, and other Stay In School programming and marketing consultants. Private consultations were held with the local participants of the document testing stage.

Representatives from the following organizations participated in the document testing phase: Student Support Services of Manitoba's Department of Education and Training; Minnedosa Collegiate; Parklands Aboriginal Parents' Association; Logan Community Development Corporation; Native Education Branch; Employment and Immigration's Public Affairs Department; and Frontier School Division. Again, it

was important to involve people from a variety of cultural, professional, and geographic backgrounds to ensure that the guide would be appropriate for the diverse target groups identified in the terms of reference.

The draft was reviewed for plain language (target reading level of grade nine, active verbs, easy to understand), practicality, appropriateness of community mobilization steps, accuracy of background information on the dropout issue, fair representation of urban and rural programming and dropout prevention initiatives, and political correctness -- no gender bias and proper current terminology -- ie. "aboriginal" favoured over "native".

One participant thought that the guide was too academic at times and that it should be more positive. This feedback was used when creating the next draft. However, another participant thought the guide showed an urban bias. This comment was further discussed with the Westarc Group. It was decided that since this was the only comment of this nature and because other rural participants thought the guide fairly reflected both rural and urban communities and program initiatives, the comment was considered but changes were not made. Other feedback suggested ensuring that there were enough examples contained throughout the section on organizing an action committee to make the guide easier to use. In response to this feedback, more examples were added to the guide.

Feedback received, especially that received from community organizers, was helpful in making the mobilization strategy as realistic and understandable as possible. This served to increase the guide's overall chances for successful implementation and use.

Feedback from this phase of the project was highly varied and sometimes contradictory. With twelve participants providing feedback during the testing stage, this was a very time consuming and difficult phase of the creation of the guide. Finally, it would be up to Employment and Immigration Canada's senior program staff to make decisions regarding contradictory feedback. Three meetings with Employment and Immigration program staff were held to review what changes needed to be made to the guide.

2.6 Preparation and Distribution of the Final Draft

The final draft of the guide was written taking into consideration all of the feedback received during the document testing stage of the project. After the revisions were made, the final draft of the guide was presented to Westarc Group Inc. Westarc was then responsible for formatting the text into a camera ready copy for the printers. The author was consulted regarding the graphics for the guide, which were then created by a Brandon illustrator. The guide was translated into French by a translation consultant in the area. It was printed and copies were delivered to Programs and Services, Canada Employment and Immigration, Manitoba region for distribution to communities across Manitoba.

Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide was distributed in the spring of 1993 to Canada Employment and Immigration offices across Manitoba, to school divisions, and offices of the Manitoba Department of Education. Because no follow-up phase was ever included in the project budget, none was ever done to determine if the guide was being utilized in the communities that received copies.

Chapter Three: The Product of the Practicum

3.1 Introduction

The product of this practicum was a thirty-eight page guide to mobilizing communities entitled, *Helping Kids Stay in School: A Community Guide*. The choices made regarding the mode of mobilizing communities, the contents of the guide, the style in which it was written, the lay out of the text, and the use of graphics were the author's best response to the terms of reference that were laid out by the Westarc Group of Brandon University (in consultation with Employment and Immigration Canada), the feedback and testing process used to evaluate and finalize the contents of the guide, and the inherent limitations of the project itself. This chapter will explore the "key decision" made in choosing the community mobilization process, how the contents of the guide were decided upon, and an overview of the information and strategies for mobilizing a community contained in *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*.

3.2 The "key decision" -- Community Mobilization

The nature of the guide and its contents came out of the key decision that was made when developing the guide. That key decision was to focus on how community members can organize Stay In School action committees as the vehicle to tackling the dropout problem in their community. This method of organization is the community development or community mobilization process. "Community mobilization" was

considered to be the most appropriate process identified for communities to address dropout issues for a number of reasons. First of all, it dealt with some of the inherent limitations in the terms of reference for the project, such as the diverse groups and communities (native, non-native, rural, and urban) targeted for the guide. By its very nature, community mobilization is flexible and adaptable and as such it could address the uniqueness of the communities where action committees were being formed. It takes into consideration differences like a community's strengths and weaknesses, cultural base, available resources, and the willingness of residents to become involved. This would also be helpful in addressing the issue of diverse target groups.

Community mobilization is based on the philosophy that people can take charge of their lives and gain the power to define, analyze, and solve their own problems.[22] This was ultimately the challenge that was put forward by the Stay In School Initiative -- that community members themselves learn about those dropout issues specific to their community and establish their own strategies, and in doing so, help more kids stay in school.

The mobilization process utilized in the guide takes residents through the six stages of community mobilization (as outlined in Chapter Four) from the exploratory stage on through the discussion stage, organization stage, and activity stage, and ending with

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[22]George Kent, "Community-based Development Planning", Third World Planning Review, vol.3, no.3, August 1981, p.313.

the stages of evaluation and continuation. These steps of mobilization use the organization of action committees as the vehicle to address issues at the community level.

3.3 Overview of *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*

The terms of reference from Westarc Group and the processes of obtaining feedback and document testing helped to determine the final contents of *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*. The style in which the guide was written, the lay out, and the graphics were all in response to the desire to make it as accessible as possible. The complete version of *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide* is located in the appendix of the practicum. The following sub-sections will provide some insight into how choices were made regarding contents of the guide and a basic overview of what can be found in the guide.

3.3.1 How the Terms of Reference Affected Contents of the Guide

The terms of reference provided boundaries for the guide's contents. For example, the terms of reference included providing a general description of the dropout situation and its effects on communities. This would be helpful in giving residents easy access to information on why kids leave school early, signs of at-risk students, and the economic and social effects of the dropout situation on the future of young people and their communities. In providing this information, it was felt that residents would be able to start dealing with the problem immediately rather than having to

research the basics of the dropout issue on their own. The guide was then to include information on how individuals could research more specific information about the dropout problem in their own community -- how to find out more about the dropout rate, and steps to calculate the dropout rate if their schools have not already done so.

The terms of reference also indicated that a definition of stakeholders, barriers to participation, and the identification of potential stakeholders be included in the guide. In response to the terms of reference, a section which described potential stakeholders and barriers to participation was included. Other boundaries for content in the guide included providing information about how to recruit stakeholders and how to plan for action and develop strategies to address the dropout problem. A section was created which included information on organizing a Stay In School action committee, developing a plan of action and a time line, tapping resources in your own community, what your community can do about the dropout situation, using local media, and holding community meetings.

It was also requested by Westarc Group that examples of dropout prevention programs already in place also be included in the guide which would be representative of rural, urban, native, and non-native initiatives. Not only would this highlight the good work already being done across the province to address the dropout issue, it would serve as some clear and specific programming examples of what other communities could do to reverse the dropout trend. As a result, a number of dropout

prevention programs were included in the guide that covered different programming areas and different geographic and cultural groups as well.

The terms of reference also indicated that information on strategic planning, short term and long term goal setting, and evaluating successes be included in the guide. A section entitled, "Planning for Action" was created for the guide which covered these areas of community mobilization.

Other sections created in response to the terms of reference for the guide included a checklist to follow for the organization of a stakeholder meeting, a sample agenda, and questions for group discussion, information on conducting a better meeting and a checklist, and a list of programming and Stay In School resources available in Manitoba.

Westarc Group, through the project's terms of reference, also requested that the guide be written in "plain language". For a document to be written in plain language it must have a reading level of grade nine or less. It should have sentences that are short, uncomplicated, and contain active verbs. The document must also be easy to read with a larger font, bullet points, sub-headings which are different sizes and bolded or underlined, and have graphics that help to illustrate in a visual manner, concepts which may be difficult to understand. The rationale behind requiring the document be written in plain language was that it would then be accessible to a larger numbers of residents -- some who may not have completed elementary, junior high,

or high school, or those for whom english is a second language. By making it accessible, it would provide a greater opportunity to have better representation on the action committees from all segments of society.

3.3.2 Finalizing the Contents of the Guide

During all of the phases of the development of the guide, there were opportunities for input and feedback not only from Westarc Group and Employment and Immigration Canada, but also from educational, employment and training, and community development specialists who were representative of the diverse nature of the target groups and who were helpful in ensuring that the guide was both reflective of these communities and at the same time accessible to them. The final contents of the guide came out of a lengthy and thorough process of involving these specialists in a document testing stage of the project. Twelve participated in this stage to ensure that the guide was factually accurate, had no biases, was easy to use and easy to read, had terminology that was gender neutral, culturally sensitive, and not overly academic. The guide was revised according to the feedback received during the document testing phase. Employment and Immigration Canada was then involved in final meetings with the project team of Westarc Group to finalize the contents of the guide before it went to print in English and was translated into French.

3.3.3 Writing Style, Reading Level, Layout of Text, and Graphics

As indicated in the above section, the guide was written in plain language at a grade nine reading level to make it more accessible to community members. This would enable there to be a greater representation of cultural, and socio-economic groups within the community on the action committee. The text of guide is laid out in a double column format. It is visually accessible (clear and uncomplicated) and easy to read. The font is a larger 14pt which makes it accessible for the visually impaired. The headings and sub-headings are large and bolded, have a variety of sizes, and are capitalized.

While the author did not create the graphics for the guide, she was involved in the consultation stage in which the concepts were developed. She ensured that the graphics complimented the text, both in tone and in style. For example, the cover graphic depicts one in three students dropping out of school. However, in keeping with the positive outlook of the guide, a safety net is there to catch the student and propel them back into school. The Stay In School Initiative's "sun" graphic is incorporated into the graphics to provide continuity with their other printed materials. The graphics for the title pages of the sections convey the mobilization stage of each section. For example, the graphic for the title page of the Resources and Programs section depicts someone researching and coming up with numerous ideas.

3.3.4 Contents of the Guide

Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide is divided into six sections, not including the introduction. The introduction, entitled "This Guide", sets the tone for the guide. It introduces the serious nature of the dropout issue and its effects on young people, their parents, educators, and the community. It places the responsibility for addressing the dropout problem onto communities, as well as providing an overview of the "tools" that the guide will provide.

"The Facts"

The first section, "The Facts", serves as a shock tactic; it lays out the hard facts about the dropout issue. It provides statistics on the long term effects of the dropout problem on communities and on the entire country if it goes unchecked. The section also gives information on the reasons contributing to kids leaving school.

"What Can We Do?"

The second section called, "What Can We Do?", provides ideas for taking action on the dropout issue. It gives examples of what other communities have done to address the problem. These program examples are representative of all the target groups (native, non-native, rural, and urban). This section also sets out how groups can utilize community resources, including how to solicit donations, find space to run programs, and get the support of businesses through the sponsorship of specific programs. It provides information and examples of how people can get involved at

the individual, committee, and community level in order to affect change on the dropout problem. It also supplies information on how to find out about or calculate the dropout rate in their communities, and how to set up a system to track the dropout rate.

The last part of the section provides a list of characteristics which would help to identify students who are at-risk of dropping out of school. In a general and rudimentary way, this section provides information for how to conduct a simple needs assessment and issue exploration of the dropout situation. This would prepare someone for the next mobilizing stage, putting together an action committee.

"Building a Team"

This fourth section, "Building a Team", provides a step by step guide for putting together a Stay In School action committee -- from how to identify potential committee members or stakeholders to holding community meetings and agendas for the first couple of action committee meetings. It also looks at an alternative method of getting the dropout issue addressed through using existing community groups or committees, "piggy-backing" the dropout issue on another appropriate group's (like a parent council) agenda. This section also stresses the importance of getting the support and involvement of schools and young people throughout the process. It also identifies the advantages to networking and partnering with other community organizations and keeping them informed of the action committee's work. Hands-on

information is included about how to organize a community meeting and do follow-up recruiting and organizing with residents who attend. Information on the importance of using the local media to increase awareness of the dropout issue and to get people to join the action committee is also included in this section. There is also a section on the roles and expectations of potential committee members which includes information that should be passed onto them before they join.

"Keeping On Track"

In order to keep action committee members involved and content, the fifth section entitled "Keeping On Track" provides ideas for how to keep people motivated and how to best use their energy and skills. It looks at what needs people have from groups and how group leaders can work to ensure that these needs are met.

"Planning for Action"

The "Planning for Action" section provides tools for how the action committee can set goals and objectives and develop a plan of action and a time line. It incorporates an evaluative process into the action plan and provides a work sheet for planning as well. Guidelines to conduct "better" meetings are also included as well as sample agendas for the action committees first two or three meetings.

"Resources and Programs"

The "Resources and Programs" section at the end of the guide provides lists of resources and support that is offered by Canada Employment Centres across Manitoba along with ideas for other materials with information on the dropout issue. It looks at existing federal and provincial government programs and services offered that could be of assistance to Stay In School action committees and information about how they can link up with the Stay In School Initiative and apply for funds for specific dropout prevention programs.

3.4 Limitations of Development Process

The limitations inherent in the terms of reference established by Westarc Group included the following. It was targeted to urban, rural, native, and non-native groups, which could have made it too general to be useful. As a result of this, it may not have been able to address the uniqueness of each group or to provide what could, perhaps, be more appropriate and effective ways of mobilizing their community members. Because of time and financial restraints, the testing stage of the project did not involve having Stay In School committees actually use the guide and provide more insightful feedback. Another limitation imposed on the project was that no follow-up or evaluation stage was included as part of the process. Nor was any funding available for groups to bring in community organizers or to pay for Stay In School programming.

Chapter Four: Reflections on Practice

4.1 Introduction

When approached by the Westarc Group to develop a guide for Manitoban communities to address the dropout problem, the author recognized that the most appropriate and effective planning theories to accomplish this task were social learning and community mobilization. As the task was to develop what was essentially a "how to" guide for community action, it would be necessary to consider a method of approach to planning that was learning-centred and community-based. No professional organizers would be sent into these communities to establish strategies that would reverse the dropout trend. Community members themselves would be called upon to learn, to organize, to strategize, and to implement dropout prevention programs. As such, the planning theories chosen for this project would need to allow for greater flexibility, be more easily adapted to a particular community, be open to a great deal of experimentation, maximize social mobilization, and be self-supporting. The planning theories that seemed most appropriate were social learning and community mobilization.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the planning theories and concepts which were used to develop *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*. The relevant theories and concepts include: community-based development planning theory; social learning; transformative planning theory; and popular education.

The mobilization guide was developed out of two main streams of planning theory -- community-based or self-help planning theory (1965)[23] and John Friedmann's (1987) transformative planning theory.[24] Both belong to the normative and radical schools of planning thought. They are participatory, problem-posing/problem-solving, empowering, and learning-centred theories. In transformative and community-based planning, planning is a process of enablement, not one of describing or prescribing. It is a conscious and deliberate action of directing change in an equitable and just manner. Other theories utilized include John Friedmann's (1987) theory of social learning[25] and Paulo Friere's (1972) theory of popular education[26].

Helping Kids Stay In School: A Guide for Communities utilizes the community mobilization process's six stages of community development/mobilization.[27] These stages were transformed into the steps that a community could take to organize itself and address the dropout issue. These six stages take a community from the exploratory stage -- where the fears and aspirations of the community become known

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[23]William and Loureide Biddle, *The Community Development Process: The Rediscovery of Local Initiative*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965).

[24]John Friedmann, *Planning in the Public Domain: From Knowledge to Action*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp.389-90.

[25]John Friedmann, "Planning as Social Learning", Working Paper 343. (Berkeley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, February 1981).

[26]Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

[27]Biddle and Biddle, 1965, pp.40-41.

-- on through to the organizational stage, activity stage -- where project work begins -- and through to the evaluation stage and continuation stage. The six stages of community mobilization and develpment will be dealt with in more detail in section 4.4.

The work of several community organizers and planners will be utilized in describing the specific work, inspiration, and organization necessary for each stage of community mobilization. Those stages will be explored together with the respective steps described in the guide for mobilizing a community to address the dropout issue.

4.2 Social Learning, Transformative Planning, and Popular Education

The community mobilization and development process were founded on a number of planning and educational theories. These include transformative planning, social learning, and theories of popular or informal education. These theories and their links to the community mobilization process will be explored.

Social Learning

The philosophical foundation of community mobilization and development is built upon the concept of social learning. While community members may not be so-called experts in the field of community development or experts on the issue or problem that they are addressing, during the time that they are involved in community action, they will be continuously developing skills and knowledge about the process and about the

problem. The mobilization process used in the guide assumed that social learning would occur -- that members of a community would utilize their knowledge and experience which they brought with them. As they participated in the process of planning and taking action on the dropout problem in their community, they would further develop their skills and increase their knowledge about community mobilization, working as a member of a team, developing strategies, programs for at risk students, and the dropout issue itself.

John Friedmann is renowned for his work regarding planning and social learning theories. Friedmann defines social learning as "the process by which scientific and technical knowledge is joined to organized action."[28] Planning is a form of social learning that mediates between knowledge and action.

Community organizers and community members alike share and engage in mutual development through their participation in the planning process.[29] In planning, social learning occurs through the dialogue process, wherein all those partaking in community planning enrich each other through their thoughts, observations, and previous experiences. Friedmann sees the role of the planner as that of directing change and facilitating the dialogue process.

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[28]Friedmann, 1981, p.1.

[29]Friedmann, p.2.

The concept of social learning is simple -- as human beings we continually learn. We continue to learn outside formal educational institutions, and through day to day experiences we endlessly reshape our existing knowledge. The process of social learning begins and ends with action. When attempting to solve a problem, we rely on theoretical or formal knowledge and whatever previous experiences we have had that are relative to the given situation. Once a solution or decision is reached, this most recent problem-solving experience will be added to our knowledge base, and be relied upon should a similar situation arise.

Social learning implies learner-acquired rather than teacher-instilled skills. It is active, informal education in comparison to the traditional style of education which is passive and formal. Learning by doing forces a recognition of the realities of each given situation. It stresses the adaptive application of knowledge.[30] While we might not always feel able to adequately deal with a problem that we are dealing with for the first time, the act of working through it constitutes a genuine learning experience.

Involvement in community-based planning provides local people with experiences which create social skills necessary to deal with other people, with neighbours, with experts, and with politicians. These include the ability to rationally discuss a controversial proposal, the ability to cooperate with other community members, and

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[30]Michael Mattingly, "Implementing Planning with Teaching: Using Training to Make it Happen", Third World Planning Review, vol.11, no.4, 1989, p.420.

the disposition to accept a problem as a challenge and as an opportunity.[31]

Transformative Planning

John Friedmann's transformative theory of planning, from the radical school of planning thought, incorporates social learning, where planning mediates between knowledge and planning action. Transformative planning is based on experience, and combines a fusion of analysis, social vision, and hard strategic thinking with the intent to shape ongoing political practice.[32] It focuses on the structural problems of capitalist society, and provides a critical interpretation of existing reality. Transformative planning charts a forward-looking perspective of a problem. It is based on empowerment and suggests the most appropriate strategy for overcoming resistance of established powers in the realization of desired outcomes.[33]

Transformative planning is derived from the social mobilization tradition of planning, but has its own distinctive character. It has an expressive language that reaches ordinary people, it is comprehensive, it adapts general theory to unique and specific settings, and is continually renewed through critical reflection. The main goal of this kind of radical planning is the mediation of theory and practice in the transformation

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[31]Biddle and Biddle, 1965, p.251.

[32]Friedmann, 1987, pp.389-90.

[33]Friedmann, 1987, p.389.

of society.[34]

Transformative planning focuses on the familiar problems related people's livelihoods -- jobs, housing, education, and providing for themselves. It may also be concerned with organizing alternative services for particular groups in society, for whom neither the state or private businesses have adequately provided. It may address general issues like the protection of the environment, education, or peace. Through a process of mutual learning, and extracting community-based knowledge and skills, all relative information is made translatable into action plans. Knowledge is part and parcel of the community, and of the planning process.

Transformative planning is complex and challenging, and the planner must bring skills of analysis, synthesis, communication, and managing group processes.[35] They also must be able to draw on substantive knowledge and be prepared to share information, relevant data, and theoretical insight pertaining to the issue or problem being addressed.

The loosely coordinated style of decision-making and action associated with transformative planning allows for greater flexibility and is more easily adapted to a particular community. It also allows for a great deal of experimentation, maximizes

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[34]Friedmann, 1987, p.391.

[35]Friedmann, 1987, p.393.

social mobilization, and is self-supporting. This method of planning contrasts greatly to planning by government with its narrow vision, distance from people's everyday concerns, indifference to the uniqueness of each community, and its hierarchy.[36]

Popular Education

The educational method used in the process of social learning, community-based planning, and transformative planning is informal and active. Popular education techniques were incorporated into the mobilization guide, encouraging informal and learner-centred training and awareness-building exercises for Stay In School committees.

Popular education theory is based on the concept that learning should take place through one's participation in activities relevant to the learner's life and environment. Paulo Freire's model of popular education is based on this learning and teaching style, wherein the teacher and student become one and the same - the instructor who also learns from her student, and the student who also teaches her instructor. He describes this as co-intentional education:

> Teachers and students, co-intent on reality, are both subject, not only in unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of recreating that knowledge.[37]

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[36]Friedmann, 1987, p.395.

[37]Freire, 1972, p.56.

It is problem-posing and problem-solving education, and ultimately, consciousness-raising for everyone involved. The teacher and student are jointly responsible for the learning process. This contrasts the formal "banking" concept of education, wherein information is deposited into the student by the teacher. In popular education, learning is interactive, and knowledge is attained through experience and observation. Students progress at their own rate, and skills already possessed are built upon, "for the greater good of humanity".[38]

Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*[39] is based on the utilization of popular education in the liberation of both the oppressors and the oppressed. To be oppressed is to be denied the opportunity to become fully human. Through education which is community-based, relevant, reflective and responsible, a critical awareness of the context of their lives develops. This challenges oppressed people to transform their world: revolution through education.

Informal learning is focused on individuals and groups for the purpose of: raising their awareness of their own context; raising their knowledge of their own environment; and for creating skills which put them in control of their own futures according to the limits and possibilities of their settings.

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[38]Freire, 1972, p.71.

[39]Freire, 1972.

Paulo Freire and John Friedmann both believe that dialogue plays a major role in the informal learning process and in the planning process. Dialogue occurs on many different levels. In Freire's pedagogy, dialogue concerning their actions occurs among the oppressed:

> The more people unveil this challenging reality, which is to be the object of their transforming action, the more critically they enter that reality.[40]

Dialogue becomes necessary for critical awareness to develop, which is then, in turn, followed by active transformation of their existing reality. When individuals become more critically aware of their surroundings and actively learn how to effect change upon them, the process of community development begins, at the level of the individual.

The process of joint reflection which Freire describes, provides a basis for action which will eventually transform their situation. Therefore, the development plan is itself a form of liberating pedagogy.[41] The natural method of community planning among people is dialogue. Dialogue also occurs on other levels during the planning process. It occurs among professionals, and between planners and community members.

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[40]Freire, 1972, p.38.

[41]George Kent, Community-based Development Planning, *Third World Planning*, vol.3, no.3, August 1981, p.325.

4.3 The Community Development/Mobilization Process

Community-based development planning or self-help planning theory and practice originated in developing countries. It evolved through the work of non-governmental aid organizations and has been incorporated into Canadian planning in rural and urban communities.

Community-based planning theory is based on the concept of people taking charge of their lives: gaining the power to define, analyze, and solve their own problems, thereby attaining a greater sense of human dignity and fulfilment.[42] It is centred upon a process of human growth -- one that enables people to become competent problem-solvers. Whether the challenge to a community be the provision of clean water or tackling the problem of dropouts, it is the enablement of the people themselves to analyze, discuss, and propose ways of meeting each unique challenge that facilitates human growth and builds self-reliance.

4.3.1 Community Determines Own Needs

Through community-based planning, the community itself decides what its needs are and, when, where, and how to set priorities and establish appropriate strategies to meet those needs. Education and training programs are utilized in order to equip people with those skills that will promote effective action, enhance self-reliance, build

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[42]Kent, p.313.

confidence to act and the capacity to promote cooperative action[43]. When training and education programs are available, residents can truly participate in the planning process.

Community-based planning recognizes the uniqueness of the community in terms of its strengths and weaknesses, cultural base, and the willingness of residents to become involved, while acknowledging available financing and relying upon resources within the community. It is a flexible process, adapting to each community, as such, there is no all encompassing equation which guides this dynamic process. Often, it begins with a very specific and immediate purpose or problem within the community which needs to be addressed. Ultimate purposes and longer term objectives are usually vague in the beginning.

It may be helpful to think of development as being measured in terms of that which serves as a source of pride to community members, instead of attempting to establish a set of common and achievable standards, which quantify and qualify the actions a community takes. Insisting on common standards denies diversity, and can be seen as disrespectful. In contrast, respect for people's indigenous values honours local achievements and shows respect for local people.[44]

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[43]Christopher Benninger, "Training for the Improvement of Human Settlements", *Habitat International*, vol.11, no.1, 1987, p.156.

[44]Kent, p.324.

4.3.2 An Empowering Process

Community organizers from Montreal, Henri Lamoureux, Robert Mayer, and Jean Panet-Raymond[45] believe that community mobilizing is an educational process in which attitudes are just as important, if not more important, than skills. Mobilizing a community is really a process of liberating that community. It can result in action to set up a service or working group or initiate a struggle or campaign to make government act in the interests of the community. The best solutions can be found by people themselves, at the community level.

> The only way to bring about effective and lasting change is to directly involve the community and act according to its perceptions, its capacity to accept change, and its priorities.[46]

The power people acquire can be characterized by increased levels of competence, independent strength, ability, autonomy, and self-determination. They gain control over their lives and the competence to deal with their environment with their own energy and resources, rather than on the basis of dependence.[47] A fundamental value of community-based planning is the alleviation of powerlessness and the empowerment of people out of their own resources.

4.3.3 Looking Inward for Solutions

Alex Sim, a rural development professor and spokesperson, has explored the options

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[45]Henri Lamoureux, Robert Mayer, and Jean Panet-Raymond, *Community Action*, (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989).

[46]Lamoureux et al, p.97.

[47]Kent, p.316.

that exist for developing mobilization strategies and creative solutions for rural communities which are facing crises. Sim feels that too often, communities wait for someone or something to come from outside and solve all of their problems: from factories that will magically appear and bring needed jobs to their community to government grants and programs that will save their small town from extinction. "Messiahs are difficult to recognize and waiting for one can have tragic overtones."[48]

It is critical to work on strengthening communities so that community members will reassume a measure of responsibility for what happens in their communities and begin to look inward for solutions to issues facing their communities. The process of mobilization accomplishes both. Communities will become stronger as interaction between people increases and individuals will reassume responsibility for community issues as their inherent skills and talents are used and recognized.

4.3.4 Utilizes Local Knowledge

Community-based planning honours and utilizes local knowledge. No one is more aware of the aspirations and the abilities within the community than are the members of that community. Without their participation in planning, the planning process lacks the knowledge and spirit which exists within the people themselves. Alongside more genuine planning and development, when local people participate they enrich their

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[48]Alex R. Sim, Land and Community: *Crisis in Canada's Countryside*, (Guelph: University of Guelph, 1988), p.195.

own lives as well, developing interpersonal and organizational skills, empowering themselves as they gain a new sense of control over their own lives, and develop a greater awareness of the needs of their fellow persons.

4.3.5 Full Participation of Local People

Mobilization aims for the full participation of local people in addressing issues that are important to them and their community. When local people participate fully in the planning process it leads to better outcomes for three reasons. First, local people know the context better than any outsiders. Secondly, broad participation expedites the implementation of plans because the goals and motivation of the plans become wholly internalized, resulting in a less problematic implementation process. And, although when people plan for themselves they may make mistakes and they may harm themselves, they will not normally be unjust to themselves.[49] With the participation of people in the planning process, the goals - both stated and realized - become more intrinsic to the community, and more just. When planning is based in the community instead of in the bureaucracy it becomes a more natural and legitimate process. And, when this participation is genuine, people become empowered rather than ignored by the process.

Participation does not happen without much work by the community itself. The community residents must learn to organize themselves, to understand the issues at

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[49]Kent, pp.314-315.

stake, to communicate with each other and with the planner, and to take decisions as a group. The mode of participation which a community adopts is dependent upon the interest and commitment level of the residents, the extent to which the community is or can be organized, and the presence of local leaders who are capable of representing the community.

When a community begins to play a tangible role in the planning process, the overall mood of the community changes. Hopefulness and optimism emerge. Previously held self-centred values are replaced with community-serving values, and the timidity that clings to the assurances of the past is lost to a new courage to venture forth into an unpredictable future.[50]

4.3.6 Regenerating the Essence of Community

While mobilization is typically a response to a critical situation with tragic overtones, the effect it can have on a community can be very positive. This occurs on two levels. At the individual level, mobilization can build the confidence and skills of community members. At the community level, mobilization can result in a regeneration of the essence of community, of human relationships and social interaction. Added to this, is the advantage of having the community itself address and resolve issues that are critical to it.

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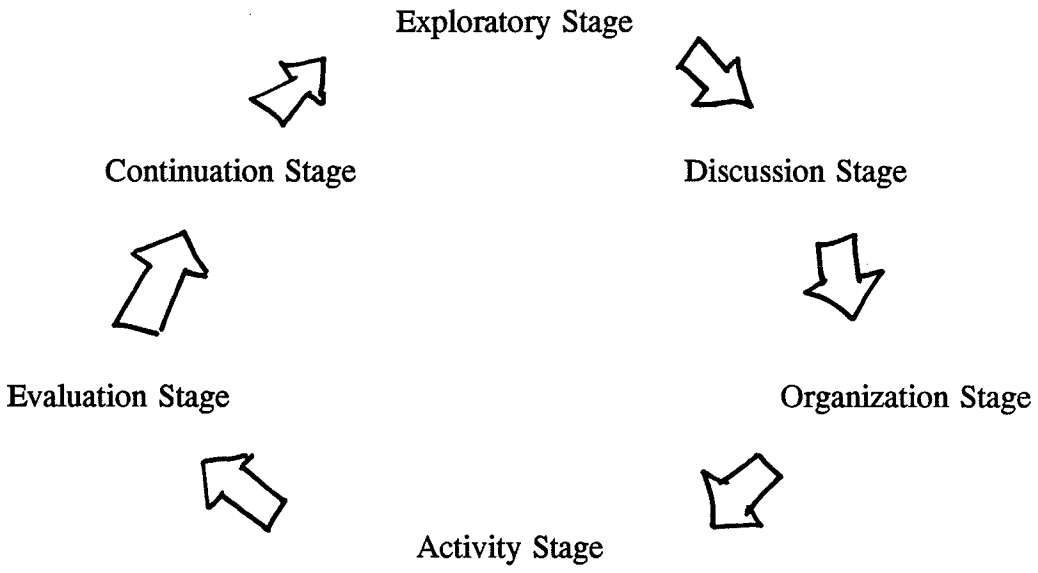
[50]Biddle and Biddle, 1965, p.252.

4.4 The Six Stages of Community Mobilization

A variety of different and unique approaches can be taken to the process of mobilization - as different and unique as the communities and the people involved. The approach may depend on the following: if an organized group is being utilized or if a new group has to be established; the experience, skills and knowledge of the people involved; the presence or absence of a community development facilitator/planner working with the group; the personality of the facilitator; and the nature of the issue being addressed. These are the approximate stages which map out the community development/mobilization process which is generally used by community development workers and community organizers:

Diagram 4-1 The Six Stages of Community Development



From: William and Loureide Biddle, *The Community Development Process: The Rediscovery of Local Initiative*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1965), pp. 40-41.

Table 4-1 Breakdown of the Stages of Community Development/Mobilization

1. Exploratory Stage:	the aspirations and fears of community become known - work being done includes door knocking, community needs assessment, identifying strengths and weaknesses, community stakeholders/potential leaders are identified
2. Discussion Stage:	the planner facilitates discussion amongst the community, information is collected - issues are identified and researched, more door to door, focus groups and community meetings are held
3. Organization Stage:	community is organized -- groups or committees are formed - core group is formed, other "stakeholders" are identified and "courted"
4. Activity Stage:	community decides upon goals and strategies, cooperative work is facilitated, projects or programs begin
5. Evaluation Stage:	work is evaluated, this can occur during activity and organizational stages as well
6. Continuation Stage:	work continues with organization intact, leadership roles can rotate

From: William and Loureide Biddle, *The Community Development Process: The Rediscovery of Local Initiative*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1965), pp. 40-41.

4.4.1 Stage One: The Exploratory Stage

The first stage of the community development and mobilization process is the exploratory stage. During this stage the aspirations and fears of a community become known through a process of observing, researching, and getting to know members of a community by meeting and speaking informally with them about what matters to them. Some community organizers also see this first stage as one of setting the tone for future work with and in a community.

4.4.1.1 Building a Culture of Hope

Joan Neuman Kuyek, a community organizer from Sudbury, Ontario feels that the process of mobilization must begin by "creating a culture of hope" for communities. It is critical for communities to break the social control and conditioning that prevents people from working together for change in their communities.

> To free ourselves from the systems that hold power, we have to start to build a culture of hope. And that begins our own lives and the lives of our neighbours and friends. It's like gardening: if you want strong, beautiful and healthy plants, you have to build up the soil.[51]

In order to prepare communities to mobilize, a learning and working environment needs to be created where people feel safe to make the transition into a culture of hope, into helping their communities become sustainable and healthy.

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[51]Joan Newman Kuyek, *Fighting for Hope: Organizing to Realize our Dreams*, (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990), p.66.

Kuyek's own approach to the mobilization process is down to earth, and is focused on the process and the people taking part. She has mobilized existing community-based groups and has formed groups specifically for the purpose of addressing a single issue affecting their community. Her approach to mobilizing people and transforming communities is holistic and it balances all the aspects of community - cultural, social, economic, and political.[52]

It is essential to create a safe environment for people to learn and work together as a first step to transforming their community. It is much easier for individuals to learn and to take risks when they can do it with people they trust and in an environment that feels safe for them.

4.4.1.2 Getting to Know the Community

When community development workers or organizers come from outside a particular community, it is essential that they spend a significant amount of time getting to know that community. Workers can do this by conducting a more academic undertaking of research on both the community and the issue(s) being addressed. It also involves spending time in the community and having informal conversations with community members.

It is the community organizer's first task in mobilizing the community to understand

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[52]Kuyek, p.61.

the community. They will need to integrate the three levels of knowledge of social reality -- perceptual, theoretical, and practical. Getting to know a community can include exploring the "models of community". These models help community organizers determine the predominant vertical links outside the community and the horizontal links within the community -- the predominant structural and functional relations. The act of mobilizing should have the effect of strengthening these horizontal links.

Before the actual mobilizing begins, organizers should: conduct statistical research on the general structure of the community; establish an inventory of existing community resources in the neighbourhood; gather information on the power networks and social networks in the community; spend time in the community observing people in order to understand perceptions and values of residents; and get an understanding of the residents' perceptions of social problems and needs.[53]

4.4.1.3 The Application of Stage One to: *Helping Kids Stay in School: A Community Guide*

Relative to the first stage of the mobilization process, the guide offers information to the organizer(s) about how they can go about researching the dropout rate and concerns that are specific to their community. The guide also provides background information about why kids dropout of school and resources available to them to find

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[53]Lamoureux et al, p.90.

out more about at-risk students, the school leaving process, and its impacts upon their community. At this stage, a parent, a school board member, or a local small business owner who is concerned about the dropout issue, may begin researching the dropout problem by speaking with the school principal, teachers, and/or other parents. They might also contact Employment and Immigration to get more information that they could share with others who are also concerned.

4.4.2 Stage Two: The Discussion Stage

During the second stage of the community mobilization process, the community organizer facilitates discussion amongst the community and continues to collect more information about the issue that is of a concern to community members. One of the objectives of this second stage is to increase awareness of the issue within the community, to raise the consciousness of the community. This can provide an opportunity for the residents to get to know one another, to speak candidly about how the issue that they are working together to address has affected them, and to do so in an atmosphere of challenge and acceptance. For example, a group of single-parents on social assistance may join forces in speaking out about existing social policy and also work to create programs for single parents aimed at decreasing feelings of isolation and building networks of support. During this phase, they would meet, get to know each other, and could speak about their lives as single parents, their experience with the welfare system, and their need for support.

The community organizer can lead consciousness-raising and exploration into the issues being addressed by the initial group of interested residents. The basis for mobilization depends on the relationship the organizer has established with the community, knowledge acquired through research, and the organizer's intuition and sensitivity to the community.[54]

The impulse to affect change comes when people are eager to learn and participation in the process of affecting change requires knowledge of the issues being addressed. "People must know what is happening in the world, and what is happening to them. They need to understand the system of cause and effect."[55] This stage in community mobilization involves the process of social learning -- people learning from their own experiences and the experiences of others, and discovering how ideas and experience can intermingle. Residents involved during the discussion stage, begin to understand how mobilization and change can occur. It is critical for community organizers to be versed in adult education and organize programs of learning, study, and social innovation.[56]

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[54]Lamoureux et al, p.115.

[55]Sim, p.188.

[56]Sim, p.190.

4.4.2.1 The Application of Stage Two to: *Helping Kids Stay in School: A Community Guide*

Relative to stage two of the mobilization process, the guide offers information for the community organizers (teacher, business owner, parent, etc.) about how to raise awareness in their community about the dropout issue. It provides ideas for working with local media to develop stories about kids who are at-risk, about the impact of the dropout issue, and of what communities are doing to address the issue. The guide provides a "how to" section of how to go about holding a townhall meeting. It lets interested community members know that it only requires one or two committed and energetic individuals to get things going, to start the process of mobilizing their community to tackle the dropout issue.

4.4.3 Stage Three: The Organization Stage

Once the first two stages of community mobilization have occurred -- the problem or issue has been researched and explored, the organizer has a good sense of the perceptions, concerns, and values of the community and consciousness raising is under way -- work to recruit members of the community into an organized group begins.

This is perhaps the most labour-intensive and energy-draining stage of the entire process, perhaps because it is the most important stage. Organizing the community is the basis for community participation in tackling whatever issue or problem is the

focus of the mobilization. During this stage, organizers face the realities and the difficulties of the mobilization process. Many people are over-involved in committees and volunteer pursuits that are extremely important to them. Others are overwhelmed by the nature of some issues and feel that change is incredibly difficult, if not impossible. People are generally busy living their lives, caring for their children, and trying to make ends meet. The conception that people are generally inactive is not very accurate.

Recruiting residents into community action efforts can be difficult because of the existing power structure in society.

> We become so accustomed to the way the power structure likes to organize things that we take on their language and are unable even to name our own needs, let alone organize around them.[57]

Not only is the societal power structure a barrier to the mobilization process, but often potential recruits have low self-confidence. Many have scars left from the educational system that prevent them from learning as adults. This has interfered with their ability to admit that they may not know everything there is to know and that has destroyed their confidence that would enable people to organize together for change.[58]

While the recruitment stage of mobilization is difficult, it is the most critical. The

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[57]Kuyek, p.1.

[58]Kuyek, p.33.

community group formed should reflect both the broader community in terms of gender, cultural base, socio-economic base, and age, and the kind of world they are working to create -- one that is co-operative, honest, caring and exciting.[59] The greatest barrier and opportunity to the mobilization process is the dependence upon the enthusiasm and commitment of volunteers. As such, it is important to understand the reasons why people become involved in volunteer-based community action and what keeps them committed to it.

This stage could begin with a general meeting in the community, open to all of the residents in the area. The purpose of the meeting would be to present the issues (starting from the residents' awareness) and ideas for action for the community. The residents would have the opportunity to discuss and respond to the issue. An initial recruitment of a core group could also occur at the community meeting. A second meeting of the recruits could be planned at this meeting for a specific date soon after.

4.4.3.1 Recruiting the Core Group

The core group consists of a few people who are deeply committed to working for the community who hopefully will assume leadership on the issue. They do not have to be big names from the community, but they should show some potential as future leaders. Leaders are good listeners, make friends easily, are comfortable with their own ideas, work hard, do not discourage easily, ask questions, have vision and a

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[59]Kuyek, p.86.

sense of humour. They have power-with, not power-over others, and are willing to step outside themselves into others' lives.[60] There is a fundamental difference between individuals who merely volunteer and those who make up the core group, assume responsibility for, and initiate and organize a group's actions. These are the people that make local action happen.[61]

When recruiting the core group, it is very important that people know what they are getting into and what is at stake. Passing on as much information as possible to potential core group members is the responsibility of the facilitator. The facilitator should also have excellent inter-personal skills, be knowledgable of group dynamics and conflict resolution in order to ensure that the group remains unified.

4.4.3.2 Nurturing the Core Group

Through the initial stages, especially, the core group should be nurtured and developed. One possibility is to use informal regular weekly meetings, where everyone can get to know one another and explore the issue around a potluck dinner. "Effective community mobilizing means finding out who the real leaders are and strengthening them."[62] Once the core group has been formed and begins to explore

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[60]Kuyek, p.88.

[61]European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions, *Out of the Shadows: Local Community Action and the European Community*, (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1993), p.84.

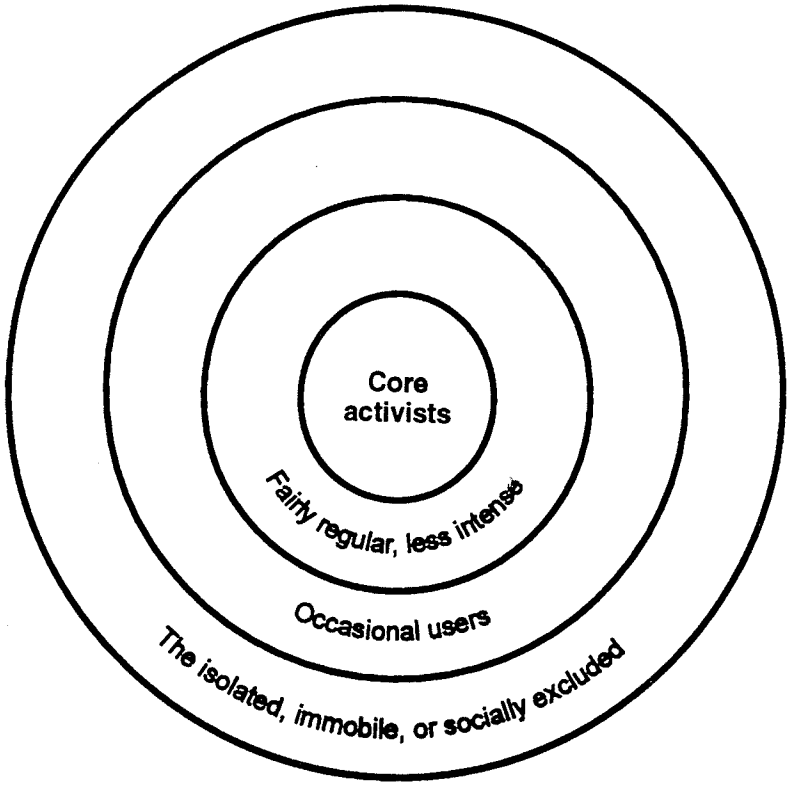
[62]Kuyek, p.89.

the issue they are mobilizing to address (using popular education techniques), the planning stages (vision-building) can also begin. The entire process, while unique to the issue(s) being addressed and the group involved, will then entail linking up with the media to increase the larger community awareness, and putting programs and/or policies in place which respond to the issue.

4.4.3.3 Recognize Why People Join Groups

It is important for the community organizer to know why people get involved and stay committed to community action groups. They do so for a variety of reasons -- they share the goals, they learn new things, they enjoy the company of other members, they feel respected and liked by the other members and/or the rest of society. By recognizing what draws people into groups, facilitators can work to ensure that the needs of people are met -- that they are learning new things, that camaraderie exists within the group, and that they feel respected and needed.

Diagram 4-2 Participation: Concentric Circles



Source: European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions, *Out of the Shadows: Local Community Action and the European Community*, (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1993), p.84.

These concentric circles illustrate the different levels of participation by local people in the mobilization and community development process. The *core group*, who are integral to the mobilization process, are those individuals who in their own time take initiative and responsibility for the formation and continuation of community-based action groups. These individuals are often people who are quite influential in local affairs. *Fairly regular participants* are people who attend groups but who are less involved than the core activists and are mainly the users of the group. They

sometimes help out with the group's activities, but they are definitely not organizers or initiators. *Occasional users* are the passive beneficiaries of the services that the group establishes; "they are the wide swathe of the ordinary population."[63]

The *isolated, immobile or socially excluded* category describes the marginalized members of a community. These individuals have great difficulty participating in and deriving benefit from the collective life of the neighbourhood. They are unlikely to participate because they are isolated and usually excluded from the recruitment or organization process. It is difficult for them to participate because of poor transportation and lack of money. Many are unable to leave their homes because of their age, illness, fear of racial or sexual harassment, looking after children or other dependents, or a sheer lack of information about what is available or happening in their community.[64]

Groups that are already established are not always receptive to the participation by the marginalized members of their community. Most groups contain rather vocal, better educated people, while the underprivileged are not represented.

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[63]European Foundation, p.84.

[64]European Foundation, p.85.

4.4.3.4 Recruiting the Marginalized in Society

One of the greatest barriers to mobilization is finding ways to involve the most marginalized members of society. The marginalized -- people who are poor, culturally or racially different, handicapped, or young -- are the most effected by changing social policy but the most difficult to mobilize. Young people are often the most difficult to mobilize of all.

> There is a strong tendency to marginalize the young, to push them off into their own corner. Much of the world of young people consists of structures and values established by their elders. Often they instinctively reject a world they did not make. Young people are hardly ever represented at the decision-making levels of the popular movement -- as if it were the farthest thing from their concerns. Yet they are the prime victims.[65]

Finding creative new ways to mobilize marginalized groups is certainly a challenge, but recognizing this is the first step to addressing it. When devising a strategy to mobilize members of a community, the facilitator should make a conscious attempt to put together a core group representative of the social, cultural and economic make-up of the community.

4.4.3.5 Educating Recruited Community Members

During the organization stage, educating newly recruited community members is extremely important. Organizers should pass on information about running "better" meetings, the process of electing representatives, setting up committees, and how to keep the group together and committed to new members. Some amount of structure

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[65]Lamoureux et al, p.38.

needs to be imposed upon the group for three reasons. Firstly, because there is no better way to involve a maximum number of people in an organization. Secondly, committees are an indispensable instrument for carrying on the activities of a group and, thirdly, having some structure and processes for groups is an expression of people's concern for democracy. It is through the work of committees, that the group's strategies and activities are developed, people demonstrate their talents, and leaders emerge.

It is also critical for the organizers to let everyone who becomes involved know what their role will be in the group, what they will be doing, and why. Organizers should determine what mobilization activities are possible so that the group does not get dragged into activities that they will not be able to carry through, by keeping in mind the sheer size of the group and the capacities of the members.[66]

4.4.3.6 Networking With Other Groups

It is a matter of networking with other organizations and communities which will allow creative ideas to move from group to group and community to community. Community-based organizations that have successfully tackled issues facing their communities do well to share their experiences with other groups in other communities who face similar challenges. While they share their experience, they strengthen their own group and encourage them on. At the same time the group will

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[66]Lamoureux et al, p.122.

be encouraged by seeing that similar challenges have been faced and resolved by other communities.

4.4.3.7 The Application of Stage Three to: *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*

For the third stage of the mobilization process, the guide provides a great deal of information for the community organizers. This includes information and ideas to use in recruiting members to form a Stay In School Committee, information on recruiting members from the townhall meeting, identifying stakeholders in the community and getting them involved, getting the support and involvement of schools, getting young people involved, utilizing existing parent groups/committees, networking with other Stay In School committees from other communities for information and support, and tips for recruiting motivated and interested community members. The guide includes a section on information to pass on to new committee members, and agendas for the first two meetings of the Stay In School committee.

4.4.4 Stage Four: The Activity Stage

Once members of a community have been recruited and organized into a group or committee, the group then enters the fourth stage of the community mobilization process, the activity stage. During this stage, the group decides upon its goals, develops an action plan or strategy to address the issue they are working on, and implements programs or projects.

4.4.4.1 Vision Building

It is important that a comfortable, safe, and accepting environment has been established, so that the group can then move on to the planning and activity stage of their mobilization efforts. This stage of mobilization can be described as the "vision building" stage in which the group constructs a vision of what their community could look like once the issue has been addressed, and new policies, programs, infrastructure, etc. are in place. It is necessary for the group to have a vision of what they are working towards before they decide on the steps they will take in getting there.

The vision that the group works together to create will become the modus operandi or guiding principle of the group. For example, if a group decided to address the issue of dropouts in their community, they would begin by imagining what their community would look like if the dropout issue was resolved -- with dropout prevention programs and program volunteers in place, potential dropouts that have been paired up with "mentors", students with higher self-esteem who set educational and career goals for themselves, a stronger relationship between schools, families, and the community, and a lower drop-out rate. This process of imagining a positive outcome of their mobilization efforts is extremely useful in and of itself -- as a group-building and group-affirming activity, and for planning the exact course of action the group will take.

One could imagine both these phases happening somewhat concurrently -- a group builds a vision of their community, while they explore their own relationship to the issue(s) they are addressing, and become unified and comfortable with one another.

4.4.4.2 Establishing Links With the Media

It is important that groups mobilizing to affect change in their community learn how to shape public opinion and establish important links with the media. Often, the success of a mobilization venture depends on the ability of the group to translate their group's information and activities into news. As a result, groups need to be both inventive and creative while understanding and respecting the role, function and purpose of the media. Groups can also create their own media through newspapers and newsletters, videos, radio, and popular theatre.

Popular education techniques are used throughout the mobilization process by many community facilitators. These techniques are very effective in exploring the issues and the group's relationship to the issues.

The mobilization process is a timely one and as such the group should take one step at a time, each in context of a strategy or vision that includes short, medium, and long term objectives. Every activity that the group partakes in should have an underlying objective of increasing the members' ability to affect their environment. It is extremely important that groups become aware of and utilize resources in their

community. For example, churches, non-profit organizations, and community economic development organizations can provide groups with valuable services if they are properly approached.

4.4.4.3 The Application of Stage Four to: *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*

The mobilization guide provides information and ideas for this vision building and activity stage of the mobilization process. This includes information about motivating committee members and sustaining the energy level, how to run a meeting, putting together an action plan and a time line, sample agendas for the first few meetings, program ideas from other communities and schools, ideas for tapping resources in their community, and resources available through Canada Employment and Immigration.

At this stage in the mobilization process, the Stay In School committee will have begun to meet, will be continuing to recruit stakeholders from their community, will have participated in a vision building activity where they have brainstormed possible school and community programs, will put together an action plan, will continue to get information on how other communities have tackled the dropout issue, will have found out about funding and resources available to them, and will have begun programs.

4.4.5 Stage Five: The Evaluation Stage

During the evaluation stage of the community mobilization process, programs under way are evaluated. The original objectives and underlying goals of the programs are compared to any tangible results or changes that the program has created. Questions about the effectiveness of the program are asked to program participants, staff and volunteers.

If possible, the action plan that the group created during the previous stage should include when and how each program can be evaluated. How well the group itself is functioning is an important component of the evaluation stage. The evaluation can investigate whether or not the members of the group are having their own needs met, if some members overworked while others are left unchallenged, how effective meetings are, and if there are other community members who can be brought on to the committee. Evaluating group processes is the signature of a healthy group. It is one important way of retaining community members.

The second component of the evaluation stage is making changes to aspects of programming and group processes that require improvement which have been brought to the attention of group.

4.4.5.1 The Application of Stage Five to: *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*

The mobilization guide stresses the importance of including an evaluation process in their action plan and time line.

4.4.6 Stage Six: The Continuation Stage

The continuation stage of the mobilization process is merely the continuation of the entire process. The group can continue to acquire more information on issues that are currently being addressed and/or get information on new issues that concern the group, they continue to recruit new members from the community, programs and initiatives continue to run, and the group can brainstorm and come up with ideas for different programs. Leadership roles within the group can change if the group members support it. For example, the position of chairperson can be rotated to ease pressure and workload and at the same time to reward or get a stronger commitment from other members of the group.

It is extremely important for the group to continue to do group-building activities and meet the needs of group members. The level of unity in the group is a clear indication of its health. This is illustrated in the various ways that people demonstrate their commitment to the group: their participation in meetings and working committees, and in the support they give each other in times of need.[67] If the group

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[67]Lamoureux et al, p.167.

becomes divided, it becomes weak and ineffectual. Potentially damaging situations which could undermine solidarity in the group can often be positive and group-building rather than group-destroying. The community organizer should be a competent mediator and assist the group in working through any conflict that develops. If not, resources are available in communities which can help groups turn conflict into opportunity.

Burnout is a significant threat to the ability of groups to stay focused and together. By being certain to attend to the needs of group members -- to be appreciated for their efforts, to be given "time out" for family, to be challenged but not over worked, to have victories, and to enjoy being part of a committed group of individuals -- community organizers or core group members can go a long way to insuring that people stay committed and focused.

Often group members can become a little overwhelmed by the nature of the issues they are addressing and with the amount of energy and time that is required of them in working for change. "In activist groups we tend to be overwhelmed by how awful things are and to trudge drearily through meetings and life."[68] It is important to bring levity and an element of fun into the process. This can be done by: using popular theatre as a tool to explore issues and their connection to them; by creating a newsletter that celebrates victories of ordinary people; or by ending a tough session or

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[68]Kuyek, p.73.

lengthy meeting with a cooperative game or by playing charades. It is also important to plan cultural and social events like potluck suppers, picnics, and dances and open them to the group and their families. If facilitators fail to address this challenge, the core group may start bickering or vote with their feet.

4.4.6.1 The Application of Stage Six to: *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*

The mobilization guide contains information and ideas for Stay In School Committees to use to meet the needs of their group members and keep their group focus and effective. This includes information about the importance of celebrating all of the group's victories, no matter how small, the continual recruitment of new members, and making sure to provide times for the group to get to know one another and enjoy each other's company.

4.5 The Role of Planners

The role that the community organizer or planner should play throughout the stages of mobilizing the community is one that should support and facilitate a resident-centred process. Their role is to facilitate an effective process in which community members select their own goals and take action. In this sense they play an enabling role in the community. One of the dangers inherent in community organizing is that the organizer begins to take on much of the work themselves, often taking "community" out of the equation. Community planners and mobilizers must stay focused on

keeping the "community" the central player in the process, supporting members in the visioning process, in decision-making, and in celebrating their victories. They must hold a conviction about the ability of individuals, groups, and communities to grow, change, to help themselves, and to conduct their own affairs.[69]

Community organizers need to possess skills in leadership, public relations, and community relations in order to establish interpersonal relationships that are conducive to community education and action. They also need the ability to establish good interpersonal relationships with other community workers, professionals, lay persons, and people working in the issue-area that the community is presently mobilized around. Organizers also need to be able to modify goals, to have realistic expectations of themselves and others, and a willingness to turn the spotlight of accomplishments back onto the community.

Community mobilization is complex and challenging, and the planner must bring skills of analysis, synthesis, communication, and managing group processes.[70] They also must be able to draw on substantive knowledge and be prepared to share information, relevant data, and theoretical insight pertaining to the issue or problem being addressed. Community organizers are often called to investigate available

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[69]Merlin A. Taber et al, *Handbook for Community Professionals: An Approach for Planning and Action,* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1972), p.10.

[70]Friedmann, 1987, p.393.

resources, employment procedures, and organizational matters and then share with committees. They must be able to work well with other people, be sensitive to the needs and objectives of the community, and bridge between the community's expectations and realistic possibilities, while making full use of the human and social resources of the community.[71]

4.5.1 Changing Roles and Responsibilities

As government shifts social responsibility back to community members, planners will need to respond and perform, what is perhaps to some, a new role. In fulfilling this new role, they will need to acquire skills in group processes and group building, board development, working with volunteers, adult education, conflict resolution, and popular education methods. Community organizers and planners will need to focus their attention on strengthening citizen participation and facilitating the recruitment of community members into community action groups. They will act to assist the community in determining its needs and goals for future action.

Changing economic times will force planners to be creative in finding alternative resources to fund community programming and initiatives and will need to support community groups in their search for creative financial solutions so that they can continue to work with groups and support them in effecting positive change in their community.

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[71]Peter Overlander, Barefoot Planners: Training Activities in Developing Countries. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Centre for Human Settlements, 1987), p.5.

4.6 Summary

The community mobilization strategy used in the development of the publication *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide* (included in this practicum as Appendix A) grew out of community-based and transformative planning approaches which are representative of the normative and radical schools of planning theory. Transformative and community-based planning are participatory, learning-centred, problem-posing/problem-solving, empowering, and enabling theories of planning. Both utilize social learning theory and encourage the use of popular education as a means of increasing the skills and knowledge of community members participating in the planning process.

The mobilization strategy described in detail in section 4.4 was created within the context of social learning theory and successful Canadian mobilization experiences in rural and urban communities. The steps described in the guide were based on the stages of community development and mobilization -- from the exploratory stage where the fears and aspirations of a community become known on through to the organization/ recruitment stage and to the evaluation and continuation stages. *Helping Kids Stay In School: A Community Guide*, though developed specifically for communities to organize in order to address the dropout issue, is a planning tool that could be used to address any issue that a community decides that it must act upon -- from taking action to stop the construction of a thoroughfare through a neighbourhood to setting up a cooperative daycare in a church basement.

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Appendix A:

Helping Kids Stay in School: A Community Guide

HELPING KIDS STAY IN SCHOOL: A COMMUNITY GUIDE

Government of Canada
Minister of State for Youth

Gouvernement du Canada
Ministre d'État à la Jeunesse

STAY IN SCHOOL

L'ÉCOLE AVANT TOUT

Canada

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THE LOGAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
MINNEDOSA COLLEGIATE
THE NATIVE EDUCATION BRANCH, MANITOBA EDUCATION AND TRAINING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STAY IN SCHOOL

THIS GUIDE

Canada's student drop-out record is a real cause for concern.

It is forcing many educators to critically examine the very basis of our educational system.

But if the situation is frustrating for teachers, parents and all who are concerned with education, it is doubly so for the students who drop out. For most, future prospects are limited, routine and unchallenging.

UNLESS OUR OWN COMMUNITIES TAKE ACTION...

Sometimes there are government programs to help us deal with problems in our community, like the drop-out issue. These programs don't last forever, but the problems will, unless our own communities take action.

This guide is for people who care enough about young people and education to want to help change the drop-out situation - like parents, teachers, students, counsellors, youth workers, community development workers, and business people. It is also for people who believe that solutions to problems can best be found at the community level.

No one knows a community and the factors influencing school dropouts better than the people who live there. So no one is better equipped to find creative and effective solutions to the drop-out situation than concerned community members themselves.

THE NECESSARY TOOLS...

This guide will give you the necessary tools to recruit and organize community stakeholders - schools, businesses, service organizations, Native friendship centres, churches, youth groups, tribal councils, families and young people themselves - to work towards the goal of reducing high school dropouts. This guide is the starting point and other resources are available when you begin to organize drop-out prevention programs and address the issues that are unique to your community and school.

This guide offers:

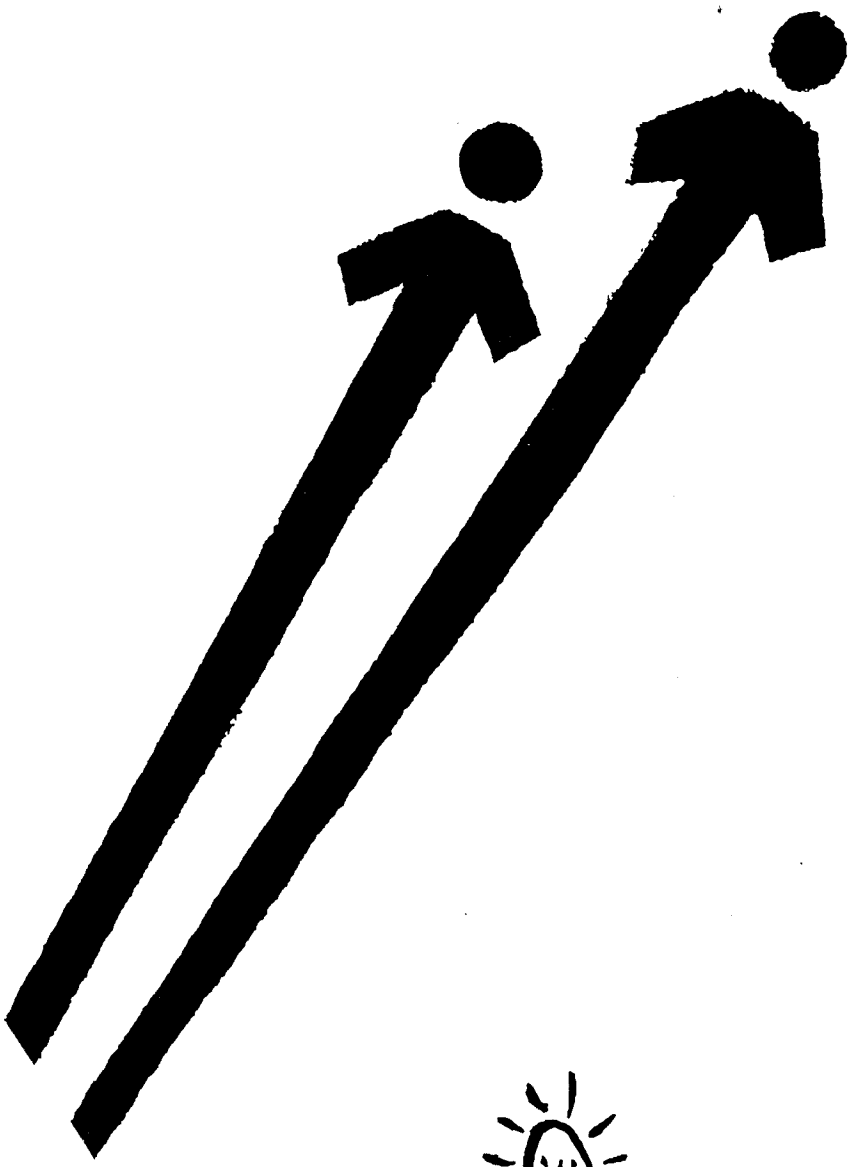
- background information on the drop-out situation,
- advice on getting your community organized and involved,
- guidelines for developing an action plan,
- ideas from what other communities have done, and
- a list of helpful resources

STAY IN SCHOOL

This guide was created under the Stay In School Initiative. The Stay In School Initiative is a five year long federally-funded program aimed at reducing the 30 percent drop-out rate in Canadian high schools.

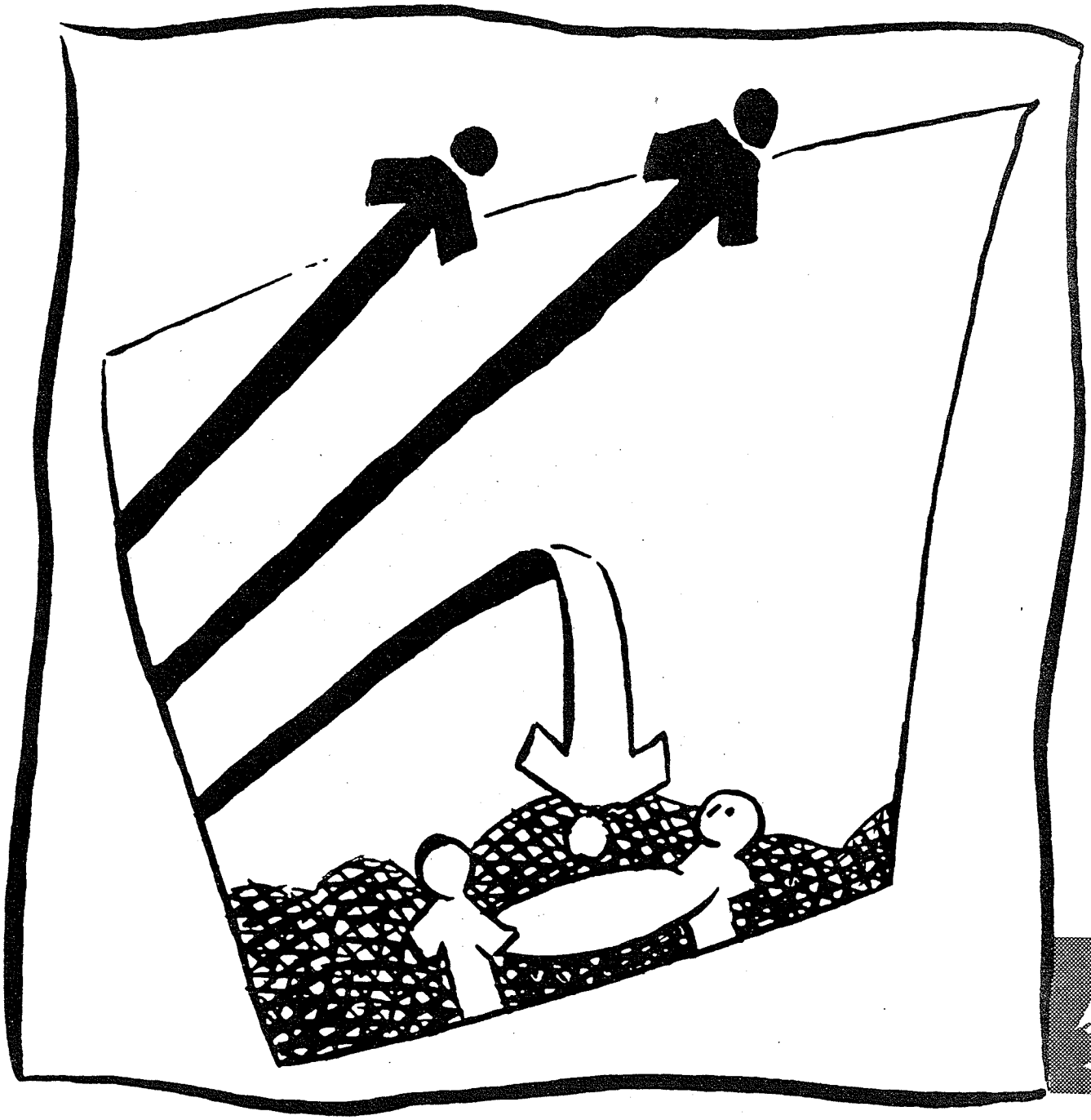
It was developed by The Minister of State for Youth and Employment and Immigration Canada to:

- help motivate young people to finish school and to prepare them for the labour market,
- to create a cooperative environment in which provinces,
- schools, business, labour, community groups, parents and young
- people can join together in an effort to reduce the drop-out rate, and
- to enhance and assist the educational system.



STAY IN SCHOOL

THE FACTS



THE FACTS

EVERYONE KNOWS...

Everyone knows that some young people never finish high school. They lose interest or become frustrated, cut classes and finally drop out altogether. It was always this way and nobody much seemed to care.

No one thought it was a problem either, until one day someone calculated the number of dropouts in Canada.

- Each year 100,000 young Canadians drop out of school
- In Manitoba, one out of every three students never finishes high school

Some things have a way of sneaking up on you...

LOOK AT THE FACTS

- At 30%, the Canadian high school drop-out rate is one of the highest in the world.
- By the year 2000, there will be one million undereducated, untrained youth trying to enter a labour market that won't want them.

The consequences of the drop-out problem are shocking, not only in human and social terms, but also for the future productivity competitiveness of the Canadian economy.

- In the next ten years almost two-thirds of all new jobs created will require more than 12 years of education.
- Half of these jobs will demand at least five years of education and training beyond the completion of grade twelve.
- A dropout will earn one-quarter less income than their classmates who graduated from high school

The demand for skills is rising to keep pace with the increasing shift of Canadian industry to new technologies such as micro-electronics and telecommunications.

If the drop-out trends continue, Canada will be faced with a large percentage of the workforce that is functionally illiterate and lacks the basic skills needed for effective job training and skills development.

WHY DO KIDS DROP OUT?

Young people do not decide to drop out of school overnight. It is a gradual process that can begin when they are very young. They "fade out" of school; often starting in elementary school. Dropouts come from all neighbourhoods, all backgrounds, all races.

STAY IN SCHOOL

- **School-related Reasons**

  Students drop out because they are bored with school, they are failing, they don't fit in, they have skipped or missed a lot of school or because they don't get along with their teachers. Many who drop out feel rejected by the educational system and react in turn by rejecting it. They don't see the importance and value of completing high school or the connection between what they are learning at school and employment opportunities. They just don't care about school any more.

- **Family Problems, Personal Crisis**

  But almost half of all kids leave school for reasons that have nothing to do with school. They may have serious family problems or financial worries; they have problems with drugs or alcohol, or have changed schools frequently.

- **Part time Employment**

  Others leave because a part time job draws them away from school. They gain a sense of independence from working that they might not get in school. Studies show that students who work more than 15 hours a week are more likely to drop out of school.

  A survey report, **Canada's Youth: Ready for Today**, states that 41% of Canadian youth, 15 to 19 years old, currently work part-time.

- **Rural Dropouts**

  Rural high school students tend to drop out at a higher rate than students in urban areas. Their reasons for leaving school include problems related to the distance they have to travel to get to school. Pressures to join their families on the farm, sometimes influences young people in rural areas to drop out. Others complain of the lack of choice in schools and programs. There are few programs available for those students who require a different teaching approach or some assistance in order to succeed in the classroom.

- **Urban Dropouts**

  Some students in city high schools who dropped out have described violence in the schools, gangs, and easy access to drugs as affecting their decision to leave. A number of family moves which force kids to change schools, often in the middle of the school year, can also lead kids in urban areas to drop out.

  There are a great many opportunities in urban centres for part time employment. As a result, many young people jump at the chance to make some money and often chose their part time job and the sense of freedom and independence over completing their high school education.

- **Aboriginal Dropouts**

  Drop-out rates are particularly high for Aboriginal students - as high as 70% in some areas. Many Aboriginal and Metis students feel that racism - both in terms of racial incidents and racism within the educational system - affects their decision to drop out of

school. They see a conflict between their own culture and the dominant culture in the school and feel that what they are learning is not always relevant to them. In addition, the limited number of Aboriginal teachers and counsellors who can act as role models make it difficult for students to feel that they are a valuable part of the educational system and to set goals for themselves.

Many young Aboriginal and Metis people leave high school because they must make money in order to look after themselves. Conditions on the reserve make many young people despondent. Leaving the reserve may not seem to be an option because they do not feel welcomed by the outside world.

Students who must leave home in order to attend high school find it difficult and lonely. Often, they have to move from their reserve or home town to a city whose cultures and values are really foreign to them. For many, it is more than cultural differences that isolate them from their non-Aboriginal classmates and teachers. They also sense that a difference in personal and financial status sets them apart as well.

Aboriginal people with grade 12 are almost twice as likely to find employment as those who dropped out before graduating.

WHAT EFFECT DOES THE DROP-OUT SITUATION HAVE ON YOUR COMMUNITY?

Many young people who leave high school before graduation face chronic unemployment problems and will depend to some extent on an already overburdened social welfare system. The life of a dropout
is more likely to be one of poverty, illiteracy, drugs, and crime. The loss of human potential is staggering.

Your community will undoubtedly feel the effects of the drop-out
situation.

- There will be fewer educated and skilled young people to be employed by businesses and organizations in your community,
- There will be fewer young people qualified or equipped to become the future leaders of your community.

Higher drop-out rates result in higher social costs to be borne by your community.

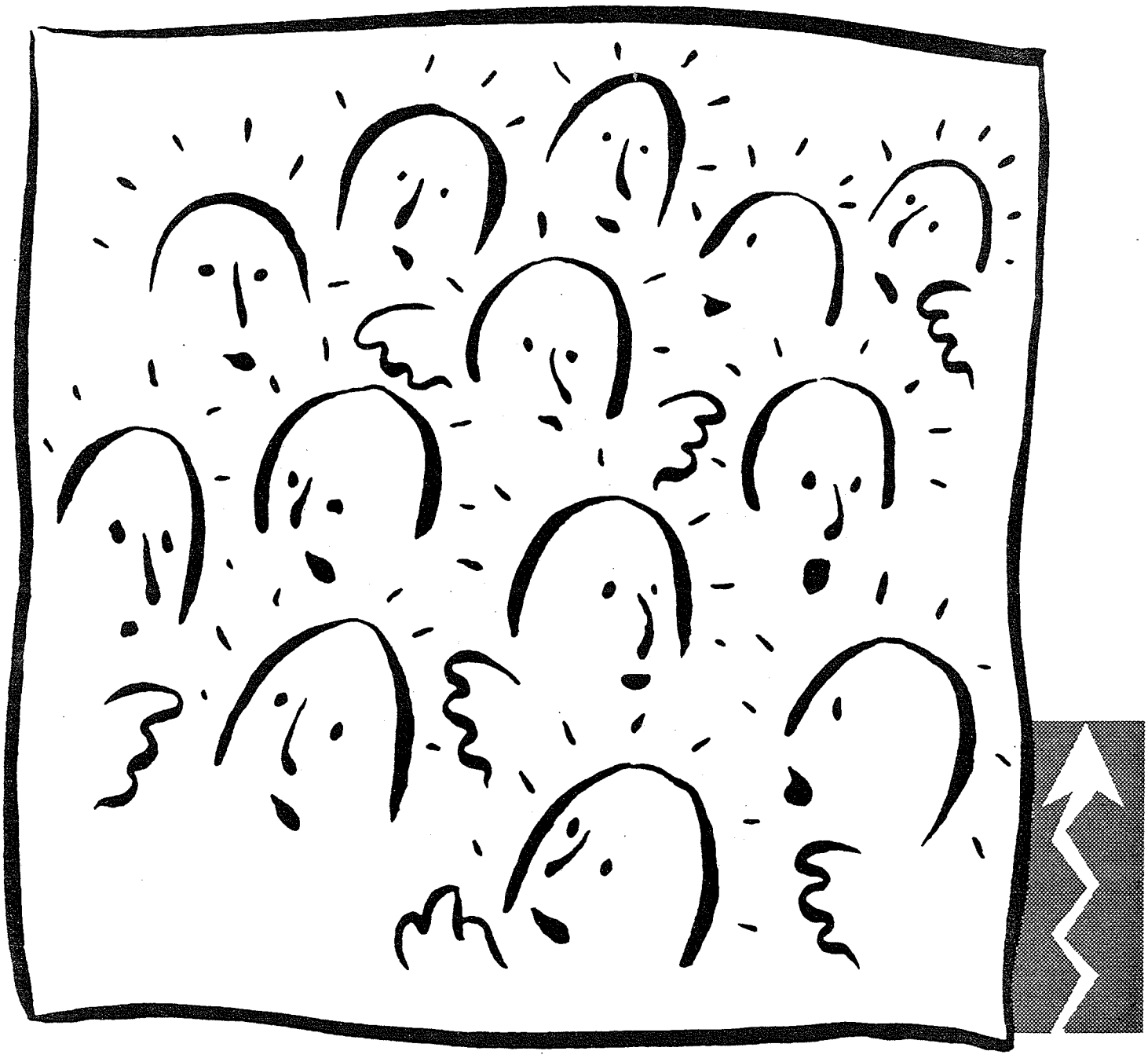
- Dropouts face chronic unemployment problems,
- Dropouts are more likely to depend to some degree on social assistance programs
- Dropouts have increasing problems with illiteracy, poverty, drugs, and crime.
- The cost to taxpayers over the working lifetime of those 137,000 young people who dropped out of school before graduating with their high school class of 1989 will be $4 billion.

STAY IN SCHOOL

NOTES:

STAY IN SCHOOL

WHAT CAN WE DO?



WHAT CAN WE DO?

EXAMPLES OF WHAT OTHER COMMUNITIES HAVE DONE

If students drop out of school mainly because they don't care about school any more and do not see the value of graduating, it is critical that such values as goal setting, hard work, participation, team work, and communication be emphasized at the early grades and be continually reinforced. These values can be learned in the classroom, at home, during extra curricular activities, and at the workplace.

At-risk students need:

- a dream, a goal, a plan;
- to look within themselves to develop their dreams and goals;
- mentors (parents, relatives, coaches, teachers) to show them the way;
- activities that teach and reinforce the values of the work ethic; and
- awareness and exposure to all the career opportunities available for them.

Individuals, stakeholder committees, and entire communities have come up with responses to the drop-out issue which are creative and appropriate for their communities. These programs draw on businesses, volunteers, and community organizations.

Your local Canada Employment Centre can assist your stay in school committee with materials on programs like those listed below.

Approach: **TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS**

This program addresses the issues of learning for Aboriginal students through an alternative curriculum which combines traditional Aboriginal teachings and current high school curriculum.

Children of the Earth High School of Winnipeg, Manitoba set-up a traditional teachings program in September of 1992. This program addresses the factors which lead Aboriginal students to drop out and makes school more relevant to them. It also creates a supportive school environment, conducive to building self-confidence, self-esteem, and beginning the process of setting goals and thinking positively about the future. The potential outcome of this program include higher student retention rates in school, lower migrancy rates, increased numbers of graduates and increased attendance at post-secondary training/education by those graduates.

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Approach: **PARENTAL SUPPORT COUNSELLING**

Paired with programs which help identify and reach at-risk students, parental support counselling helps

parents of at-risk youth become more involved and supportive of their children's education. More parental involvement makes a real difference to a young person contemplating dropping out.

The Parklands School Division, Frontier Native Friendship Centres, West Region Tribal Council, Manitoba Metis Federation, and Native Education Branch of Dauphin, Manitoba came together in a joint effort to address the needs of Aboriginal students who were at risk of dropping out. They met in February of 1991 to discuss what could be done to assist schools and teachers in dealing with these students. Their first effort was to reach the student's parents. They accomplished this by organizing parental conferences and workshops with the objective of building a better understanding of the importance of parental involvement in their children's education. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents attended and the conferences have proven to be very effective. The topics covered at the conferences were: parent/teacher interviews; racism; discipline techniques; understanding the system; and, dealing with administrators. The program is ongoing.

• • •

Approach: **ADOPT-A-SCHOOL**

A community business or organization works together with a school in the community with the objective making the link between curriculum and employment.

The Seine River School Division of St. Norbert, Manitoba teamed up with Famous Players Inc. at the St. Vital Shopping Centre in Winnipeg to develop this program which helped many potential dropouts take an active approach to learning, become positive and self-reliant, and make a successful transition from school to work.

Erickson School of the Riding Mountain School Division has partnered with Riding Mountain National Park to provide a "living curriculum" for Grade 7 and 8 students. Approximately one-third of the student's time is spent in the field learning about animals, soils, plants, etc. The in-school curriculum is also adapted to make it more relevant to the field experience.

• • •

Approach: **WORK EXPERIENCE**

Young workers spend several days at a time with an employer to get on-the-job experience.

Argyle High School in Winnipeg set up work placements for at-risk students in the inner city. Work placements and job performances were monitored, and a Job Finding Club was established. Ninety percent of the program participants secured employment from the Job Finding Club.

• • •

Approach: **JOB SHADOWING**

Students pair up with workers and shadow their work activities.

The Frontier School Division developed a job readiness training program in several remote communities in rural Manitoba. This program is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to set career goals. A component of this program involves the students job shadowing with selected employers to further explore their interest in a particular career.

• • •

Approach: **MENTORSHIP**

A business or community member is paired with an at-risk student to help them with their school work and participate with them in social and recreational activities.

Boissevain School in the Turtle Mountain School Division has established a mentorship program in conjunction with the local Chamber of Commerce. Students are matched with community members who assist them in a variety of areas, including academic, social and recreational activities.

• • •

Approach: **HOLISTIC APPROACH**

This is a flexible approach which responds to the needs of at-risk students. A team of resource staff and teachers work with students using programs which are appropriate to individual students. As the needs of each student changes, the programs change to adequately respond to them.

Minnedosa Collegiate in Minnedosa, Manitoba has used the holistic approach in addressing the drop-out issue in their community. They also believe strongly that serving as advocates for students who are at-risk of dropping out and giving continuous positive feedback and encouragement is essential. They have used Job Shadowing, Mentorship, Peer Tutoring, and Study Group in their drop-out prevention programs, and have organized field trips and and other activities to reward students.

• • •

Approach: **WORK OBSERVATION**

This program exposes students to different employment options in their community which helps to reinforce the link between school and planning their career.

Brooklands Junior High School in the St. James School Division in Winnipeg has set up a work observation program to expose students to jobs in the community that they are interested in. This has been beneficial in reinforcing the link between school and pursuing career interests.

• • •

Approach: **PEER HELPING**

This program helps to create a more supportive peer environment at school. Students are recruited and trained to become peer helpers for at-risk students in their school.

The Opasquiak Educational Authority, in cooperation with The Pas Indian Band, in The Pas, Manitoba hired a Peer Counselling Coordinator to work with students in the middle and senior years. In addition to working with students individually and in groups, the Coordinator recruited and trained students to become peer helpers.

These programs will benefit all students...

One or more of these programs may be useful in tackling the drop-out issues that effect your community. Resources are available to your group which outline these programs. The extra attention paid to educational issues in your neighbourhood school will benefit all students, not just those at-risk of dropping out.

Community participation is the key to success...

Many of these programs are feasible using volunteers and community facilities. Unless members of your community support and get involved in the programs aimed at preventing students from dropping out, no amount of government funding will help.

Get your community involved...

- get local businesses involved in work observation and job shadowing programs
- get members of your local Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions Club involved within a mentorship program for the junior school in your community
- encourage a teacher or guidance counsellor to coordinate a peer helping group in your local high school
- approach a parents group at your local elementary school and help them set up a parental involvement of elementary students

WHAT CAN YOUR COMMUNITY DO ABOUT THE DROP-OUT SITUATION?

Decreasing the drop-out rate depends on the committed involvement of parents, teachers and entire communities to encourage young people to complete school. Greater community involvement in schools will benefit all students, not just the potential dropouts.

You can be involved in actively changing the number of different levels – individually, as a member of a committee or board, or as a member of your community.

As an individual...

As an individual, you could participate in a mentorship program, providing support for an at-risk student in your community, tutor a high school student having difficulty with math, or speak about your business in front of a class during Career Week.

You could join or start a stay in school stakeholder committee, and help establish programs which link your schools and community businesses and organizations.

You could encourage your employer or employees to become involved. Can your participation in a Stay in School committee be incorporated in your job description?

STAY IN SCHOOL

As a member of a stakeholder committee...

As a member of a stakeholder committee, you can be involved with establishing creative and effective programs which will make a lasting impact on at-risk students. The program approach should take into consideration local drop-out issues and be tailored to the issues faced by young people in your community.

As a member of your community...

Here are some examples of what other communities have done to increase awareness of the drop-out issue:

- Some have encouraged their local paper and media to use the drop-out issue as a continuing theme for programming and articles directed at parents and youth.
- Others received support from recreational, community, service clubs and church groups who used the stay in school message in their programs.
- Some communities have held stay in school activities in shopping malls involving merchants, parents, teachers and youth.
- Many businesses have participated in career days and career symposiums, sponsored special awards that recognize community effort in addressing the drop-out issue, and enclosed stay in school messages for parents with their pay cheques.

Just as drop-out issues have an impact upon your community, your community can have a significant impact upon at-risk students. These examples show how community organizations, businesses, Native friendship centres, schools, and young people can help get the drop-out issue the attention it deserves.

TAPPING RESOURCES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Businesses, community organizations, government offices, churches, service clubs, Native Friendship Centres, and individuals can support your stay in school initiatives in many different ways. In times of financial restraint, it is often easier for organizations to donate services rather than money. This not only increases awareness of the drop-out issue and gets your community involved, but enables your group to carry out its work with limited funds.

Here are some examples of tapping the resources in your community:

- make arrangements with a church or school to allow you to use space for one of your drop-out prevention programs
- a local Friendship Centre might be able to provide you with some office space and equipment (telephone, typewriter)
- talk to your local printing shop about donating some photocopying, printing services, or stationary
- your community meeting might prove more successful if you can get a local bakery or restaurant to donate baking and coffee
- a local clothing store might donate some t-shirts that you could use in a

promotional event or in an incentive program for at-risk kids
- have your local community newspaper and radio station advertise upcoming stay in school events in their community events bulletin
- your local recreation centre or school may provide access to sports facilities and equipment for programming
- talk to a high school or community college teacher about having their class conduct background research on the drop-out issue in your community
- apply for a federal or provincial summer employment grant to hire a student who could share some of the stay in school team's work

FINDING OUT ABOUT THE DROP-OUT RATE AND DROP-OUT ISSUES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The drop-out rate for Canada and for the various regions is currently determined by subtracting the number of students who graduate from the number who were enroled in grade nine, four years earlier, and dividing the difference by the grade nine enrolment figure.

For example, if in 1988, there were 10 students enroled in your grade nine class, and in 1992, only 7 students graduated, you would have a drop-out rate of 30%.

Tracking individual students...

But most school divisions are beginning to develop a new method which tracks individual students instead of using enrolment figures.

They found that the traditional method no longer applies as many students now attend high school on a part time basis or change schools before graduating.

Although the tracking system requires a significant effort, the results are more accurate and identify the reasons why individual students dropped out of school. This system will be useful in developing more appropriate programs for at-risk students.

FINDING OUT WHAT YOUR DROP-OUT RATE IS...

When beginning to organize a stay in school committee, one of the first things that you will need to do is to find out what the drop- out rate and drop-out issues are in your community.

You can do this by contacting the school division, or the guidance counselling department of the schools. Many school divisions have student support service departments which deal with student issues such as dropping out.

Don't be surprised if your school division or school cannot give you an accurate drop-out rate. It is likely that they are simply using the enrolment method to arrive at drop-out rates. Why? Because it is not easy to keep track of students who may be changing schools frequently.

Setting up your own system to keep track of the drop-out rate

Once your stay in school committee is under way, you may want to work together with the school and the school

division to develop a more precise method of monitoring the drop-out rate and the reasons why young people in your community leave school before graduation.

Use resources in your community...

This may be a tough thing for the school's administration to handle on their own. Although it will not happen without the school's involvement, your committee should be prepared to help. Try utilizing resources in your community. Perhaps a university or college class could come up with a viable approach for monitoring dropouts.

This system could resemble the individual tracking system, currently being developed by the Winnipeg School Division #1. They are beginning to keep files on students who transfer from one school to another, keeping information on where and when they graduate or leave school.

Find out why...

Your school could get the guidance counsellors or peer counsellors to meet with students who are dropping out and record the reasons that led them to make that decision.

When you have a monitoring system in place, your committee can begin to address the local needs of at-risk students and develop relevant drop-out prevention programs in your community.

At-risk students in your local school

It is crucial to recognize what the early signs of a student who is at-risk of dropping out of school.

A male youth from a low-income, single parent family, who is going through a crisis in the home, working at a part-time job and has a parent who holds a negative or indifferent attitude towards education, has all the makings of a dropout.

But, dropouts come from all neighbourhoods, many excel in the classroom and have stable and supportive families. So, how do you know when a student is at risk?

Here are some signs to watch for:

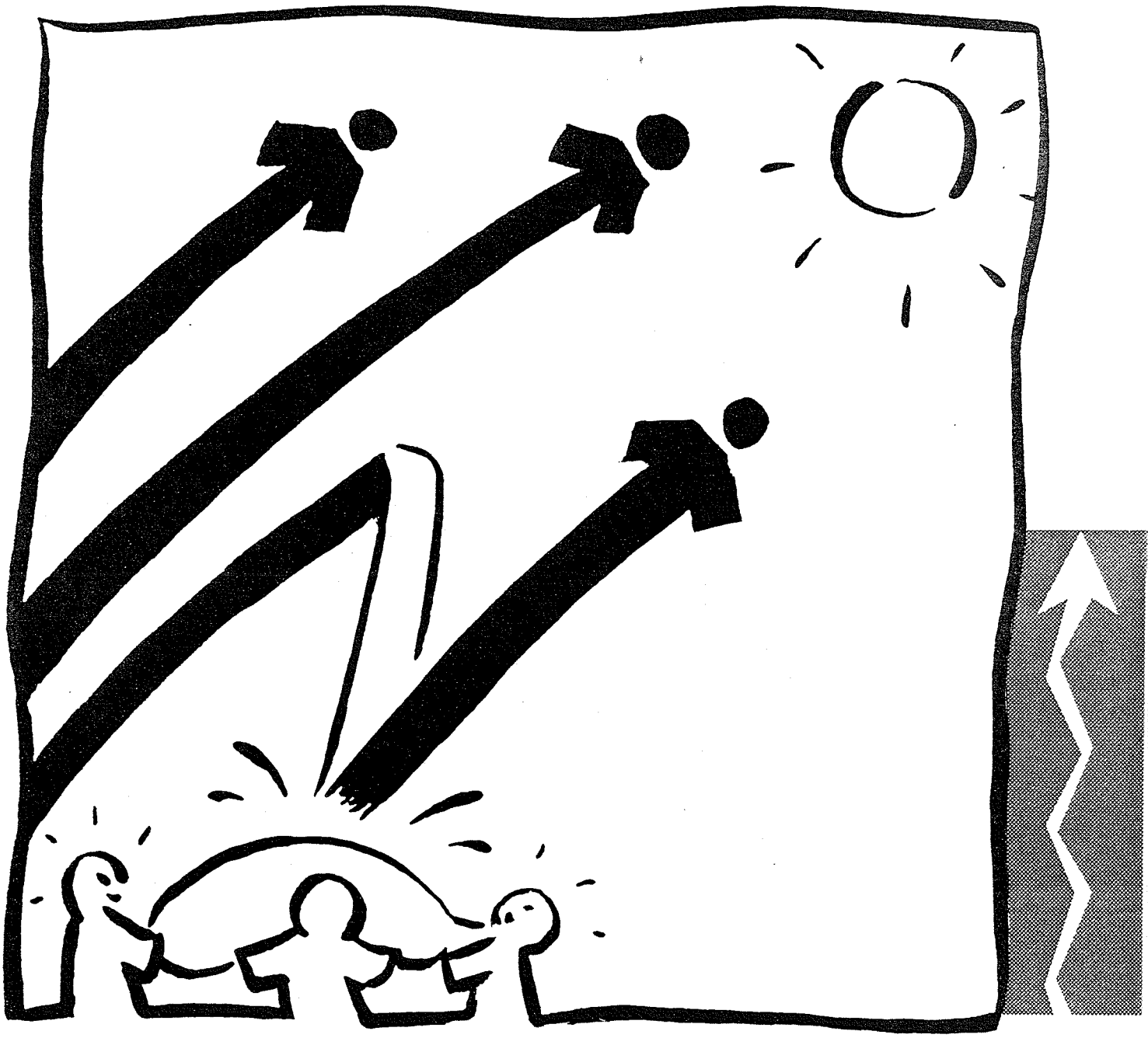
- she doesn't participate in any extra-curricular activities
- he doesn't have a sense of belonging at school
- she complains a lot about her teachers
- he frequently skips classes and has fallen way behind in his school work

With only 18% of dropouts ever going back and completing their high school education, programs which catch at-risk students **before** they drop out are critical.

NOTES:

STAY IN SCHOOL

BUILDING A TEAM



BUILDING A TEAM

BUILDING A STAY IN SCHOOL TEAM

It only takes one person to make things happen...

It only takes one or two knowledgable, dedicated, and enthusiastic individuals in your community to act as catalysts in bringing together community stakeholders who can take hold of the drop-out issue and bring about meaningful change.

What is a stakeholder?

A stakeholder is an individual or organization that has a stake in a particular issue and is willing to work on solutions to the problem. Stakeholders in the issue of dropouts include schools, teachers, parents, students, community organizations, Native friendship centres, tribal councils, churches, youth-service agencies, business, and industry.

If you are not optimistic and motivated about working on solutions to the dropout problem, it will be impossible to bring others onto your stakeholder committee. The approach you take, will make all the difference in the world.

In some instances, you may be able to get an existing group or committee to take on the drop-out issue as part of their continuing work. This may be really useful if you find that it is impossible to establish a separate committee. In smaller communities, volunteers are at a premium and not always available to take on new commitments.

- **Gaining the support of schools**

  The participation and support of schools and school boards is critical to the success of any stay in school venture. They should be the first organization you contact and include in your stakeholder committee. Hold a meeting with the superintendent of your school board and invite a program officer from your nearest Canada Employment Centre to discuss stay in school programs and the importance of mobilizing stakeholders in your community.

- **Get young people involved - it's about them**

  The drop-out issue is about young people. Students who have dropped out, and subsequently completed high school, may be very valuable members of the stakeholder committee.

  They will be able to identify with at-risk students and be able to look critically and personally at prospective programs for potential dropouts. It is incredibly important to involve young people in the

committee, as the further removed it becomes from youth and high schools, the less influence it will have.

You may be able to get names of former dropouts from guidance counsellors, teachers, Native friendship centres, and other youth-service agencies.

- **Bring in parent committees**

  Find out if there are parent committees for the local schools and speak with the committee chairs about programs to address the drop- out problem and the formation of a stakeholder committee. Invite them to attend your first meeting, where you will be able to discuss what the objectives of the committee will be and what commitment is necessary on their part to the overall success of the committee.

- **Link-up with community organizations**

  Contact Native friendship centres, service clubs (eg. Rotary Club), and other groups in your community and continue this networking process of describing the programs and objectives of the stakeholder committee. Invite the directors, youth counsellors, service clubs and other staff or volunteers involved with youth and education to your first meeting.

- **Grab hold of motivated and committed people**

  Find knowledgable, motivated, and energetic people from each stakeholder group who are willing to make a long term commitment to the problem of dropouts in your community.

- **Networking**

  Staff from the schools or school boards, Native friendship centres, etc., will probably know of qualified people they could recommend to join the stakeholder committee. Contact them!

- **Names from a community meeting**
  Conduct an open community meeting publicized in the local media to discuss the issue of drop outs. Gather names of those who attended other community or town hall meetings.

A FEW TIPS FOR SETTING UP YOUR STAY IN SCHOOL STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE

Cooperation is the key to success

Cooperation between the schools and the community is critical for the success of stay in school programming. While many schools will welcome the concern and help from the community, some may initially react with some uncertainty. They may see it as having stepped on by outsiders or they may be worried about how much extra work it could entail for them. So, be sensitive to some potential difficulties in gaining the support and participation of schools and school boards.

Try to find new people

It is not uncommon that committees and boards in a particular community are made up of all the same people. Although it is tempting to call on these people because you know that "they will get the job done", try to recruit other qualified and enthusiastic people and to come up with a committee that reflects the cultural base of your community.

Use your local media

Keep the issue of dropouts alive in your local media and on the minds of the people living in your community. Encourage your local newspaper to publish a column on the drop-out issue and education issues in general - and offer to write it! Get articles written which highlight members of your stakeholder committee and their thoughts about the drop-out issue.

Keep other groups informed of what you are doing

Keep stakeholder groups, which may not be initially involved, informed of what the committee is doing. Although you may not get their full participation in the committee, you will be keeping them on-side with other stakeholders and aware of present and future stay in school initiatives. One way to do this could be sending out a one or two page newsletter once a month to stakeholder groups.

INFORMATION TO PASS ON TO PROSPECTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Each person will bring unique knowledge and experience with youth, education, and the drop-out issue to the group. Let them know why they are being asked to join the committee, and what you hope they will contribute to the group.

- Be clear with prospective members about what is expected of them in terms of time and participation commitment.
- Provide them with background materials on the drop-out problem in your community, the Stay In School Initiative, and the goals and objectives of the stakeholder committee.
- Find out what their expectations are - the amount of time they can put aside for meetings, workshops, program involvement and degree of their commitment - are they in it for the long haul? Do they have any concerns about the work or make-up of the committee?
- Identify the strengths of committee members for working within the community - speaking to groups, writing articles in your local paper, or counselling/assisting with the creation and operation of stay in school programs.

When the roles and expectations of stakeholder committee members are spelled out and the group's expectations are clear, the committee can then begin to work on the task at hand.

HOLDING A COMMUNITY MEETING

A great starting point for increasing awareness of the drop-out issue can be holding a community meeting.

What is a community meeting?

A community meeting is an opportunity to bring teachers, parents, youth, business and community leaders together to listen and share thoughts about the consequences of the drop-out issue and ideas of how to help at-risk students find their own reasons to stay in school.

The Starting Point

It can be the starting point for building interest and support for community-driven efforts to address the problems associated with youth dropping out - throwing out a line to potential stakeholder committee prospects - individuals who would make valuable members of the stay in school committee.

Or, you could hold a community meeting after you have managed to get together a core group. This could then serve to increase awareness of the drop-out situation in your community, to gain the support of businesses and community-based organizations, and to bring other people into your stay in school team.

SOME IDEAS

Make sure everyone knows about it!

- take advantage of your local newspaper and radio station to advertise your community meeting - set up an interview on a talk show about the issue of dropouts or write a column for your local paper
- hang posters, send out invitations to the stakeholder groups, organizations, and individuals

Find an effective moderator for the evening

- find an animated and articulate member of your community to be the master of ceremonies - it will keep the audience interested and participating in the events of the evening

A Handy Resource

- invite a Program Officers from your Canada Employment Centre to make a presentation on the issue of dropouts and the Stay In School Initiative

(Their presentations are helpful in providing critical background information about why young people drop out and the consequences for them, their communities, and Canada.)

Make it Real

- make the drop-out issue relevant to your community - make the link between the drop-out issue and local businesses, community organizations, and families

- ask some young people who have experienced the drop-out issue first hand and would like to share their experience to discuss dropping out
- invite a high school drama club to present a short piece on youth who are at-risk for dropping out of school

Stimulate Discussion

- discussion groups could be set up, where each group is given a fact about the drop-out issue that is relevant to their community - give the groups 10 minutes to discuss the statement, then ask one member of each discussion group to report briefly on their group's thoughts to all the participants

Don't Let Them Get Away

- invite all people who are interested in becoming actively involved in addressing the drop-out issue in your community to leave their name and phone number before leaving. Set up a time for all those interested to meet again, within the following week or so.

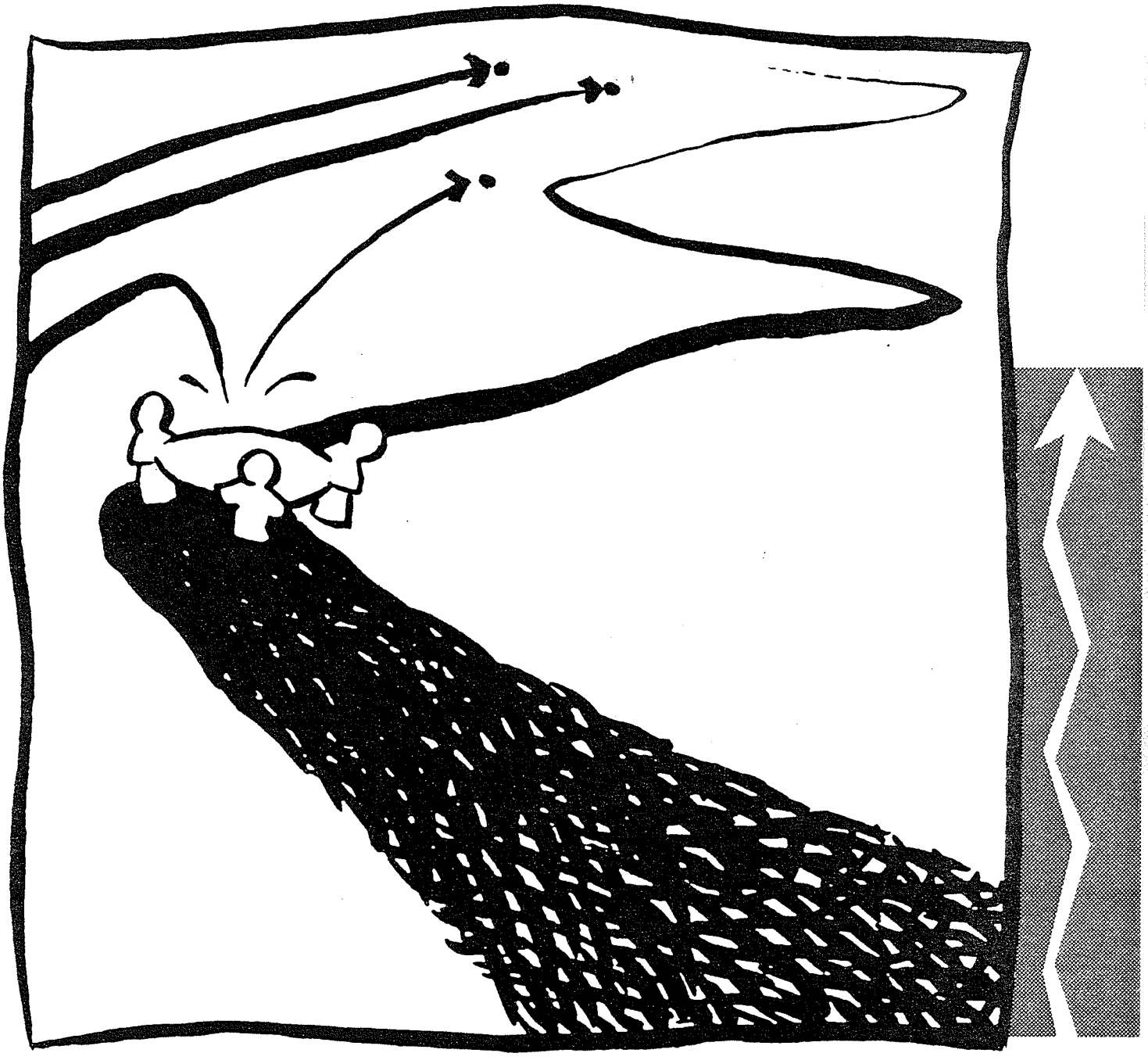
Keep it Interesting

- make the community meeting interesting, 1 to 1 1/2 hours long (at most!), and try to avoid too many lecture-style presentations which discourage audience participation.

NOTES:

STAY IN SCHOOL

KEEPING ON TRACK



KEEPING ON TRACK

MOTIVATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND SUSTAINING THE ENERGY LEVEL

The process of turning around the present drop-out trends will take a long time and a lot of energy on the part of members of your stakeholder committee.

Some of the results will be observable in a short period of time. For example, setting up a new program and beginning the process of reaching out to at-risk students. But for the most part, it will be a long time before real changes are noticed - such as an observable reduction in your community's drop-out rate. As a result, keeping your stakeholder committee together as a cohesive and motivated group is critical to your group's longevity.

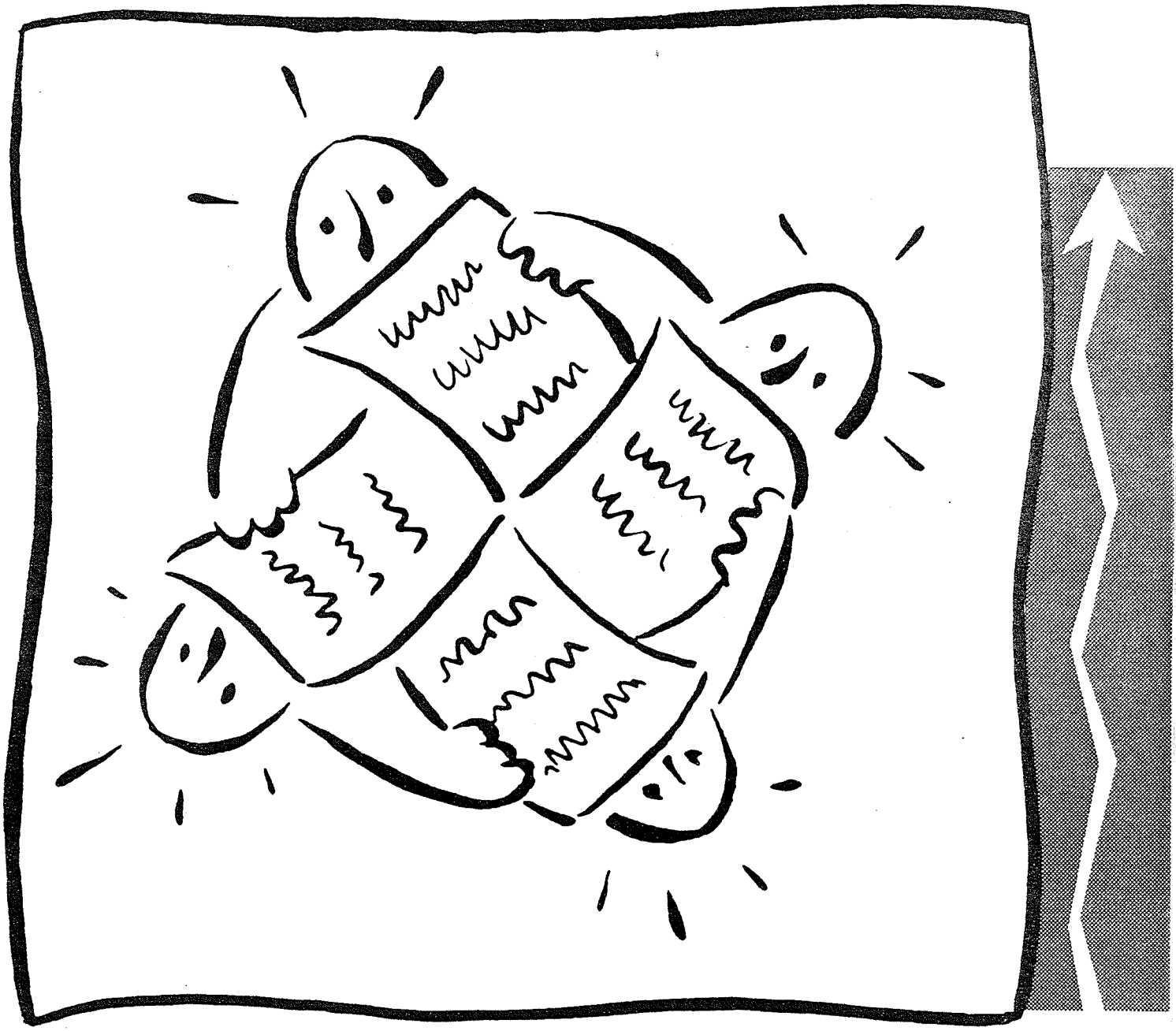
Keeping the group together...

- use the talents of all the people in the committee
- ask committee members to carry out tasks which they enjoy doing
- make decisions as a group
- make plans which take into consideration ways to develop the committee as a group
- make the effort to recognize all the contributions people make, big or small
- get feedback from your committee members on a regular basis about how the committee's work is going
- celebrate your successes, no matter how small
- don't let minor set-backs get you down
- bring new members into the group who will inject energy and new ideas.

NOTES:

STAY IN SCHOOL

PLANNING FOR ACTION



PLANNING FOR ACTION

NOT ANOTHER MEETING...

If you are like most people, you have been to meetings which felt like a waste of time. They ran 2 hours overtime, consisted mostly of bickering back and forth between two or three committee members, and left you with a severe headache and little else. The problem with most meetings is that they are inefficient and don't meet the expectations of the participants. There are a number of factors which can significantly improve meetings.

A checklist for running a better meeting

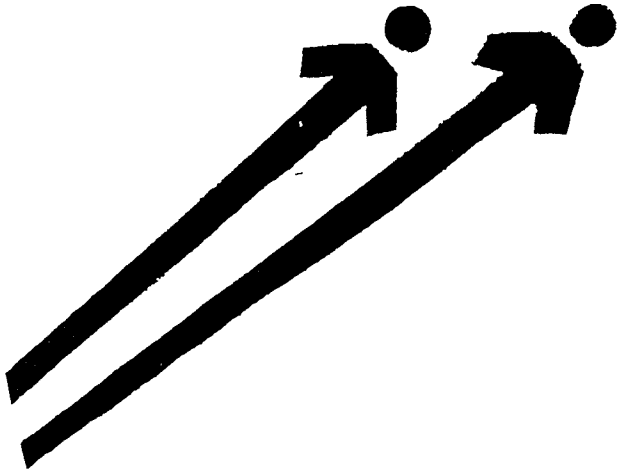
- Does your meeting have a specific goal or purpose? If it doesn't, it probably shouldn't happen at all.
- Have you sent out an agenda and any relevant information to committee members a week before the meeting?
- Did you phone committee members a couple of days before the meeting and remind them of the time and place? You'll find that more people will show up as a result.
- Is it well planned? Have you put together an agenda with the most important issues at the top and the least important at the bottom?
- Has the committee agreed on what meeting procedures they would be most comfortable with? Are you using them?
- Are you encouraging participation by all members in discussion and decision-making activities? Are you keeping them focused on the objectives of the meeting?
- Are your meetings action-oriented? Are specific actions being assigned to committee members at every meeting? Are they followed up on?
- Did you start and end on time? You can get the committee to agree on a set length meetings should be, but no longer than 1 and 1/2 hours!
- Do you occasionally hold meetings in a special place to add a little variety?

DEVELOPING A PLAN OF ACTION AND A TIME LINE

Decreasing the drop-out rate in your community will take a significant amount of energy and time. Developing a plan of action and a time line to follow is necessary for getting and keeping the ball rolling.

How long is this going to take? Establishing a time line

The following is an example of a time line.



Week 1: Talk to your local schools, school boards and relevant community organizations who can help you identify other groups and individuals you should be talking to about organizing a stakeholder committee. Contact them!

Weeks 2 & 3: Plan and publicize a Community Meeting. At your meeting, get a list of other interested community members and establish a date for your first committee meeting. (Set it for the following week!)

Week 4: Your first committee meeting should be informal, positive and brief. Meet over pizza or a pot-luck dinner and get acquainted with the potential members of your committee. Use a flip-chart to brainstorm – identifying possible program areas your committee could work on - and set a date for your next meeting, two weeks later.

Week 6: The objective behind your second meeting should be to develop a plan of action and to assign responsibilities and tasks to committee members (after listing all of their skills and abilities at your first meeting). Find out if there are other people they would recommend to join. And, develop your own time-line for the implementation and evaluation of Stay In School programs.

STAY IN SCHOOL

SAMPLE AGENDAS FOR FIRST AND SECOND MEETINGS

The first committee meeting
SAMPLE AGENDA

30 minutes	Enjoy your pizza or pot-luck dinner!
15 minutes	Have a quick "get-acquainted" activity – pair up people who do not know each other and have them introduce one another to the group
30 minutes	Using a flip-chart, brainstorm ideas for potential program areas the committee could work on (utilizing the strengths, experience, and interests of the entire group)
5 minutes	Set a date for the next meeting – not more than 2 weeks later.

The second committee meeting
SAMPLE AGENDA

45 minutes	As a group, come up with a plan of action and time-line for the committee, using brainstorming ideas from the first meeting.
15 minutes	Have all committee members share their thoughts about their level of involvement, the strengths they bring, and what responsibilities they would like to take on.
10 minutes	Are there other people that committee members would recommend join the stay in school committee? Share names and appoint people to contact potential members.
5 minutes	Set a date for the next meeting.

DEVELOPING A PLAN OF ACTION

- as a group, come up with a guiding principle, a raison d'etre, for example, "To work on improving the availability of prevention programs for at-risk students in order to decrease the drop-out rate in our community."
- establish realistic short term and long term goals of what you are trying to accomplish as a committee, and in terms of programs and activities to address the drop-out issue
- along side your goals, state objectives of how you will reach each goal, stating what is to be done, when it

will be done, and who is going to do it – make your objectives realistic, clear, and supported by all committee members

- create an Action Plan related to each objective - stating what, when, and how each objective will be reached - and relate back to your goals
- decide on how often to evaluate both your stay in school programs and the work of the committee and translate it into your time-line

Remember, addressing the drop-out issue is going to take patience, time, and a lot of energy. Celebrate your successes, no matter how small, don't let minor set-backs get you down, and bring on new members which will inject energy and new ideas into your group.

NOTES:

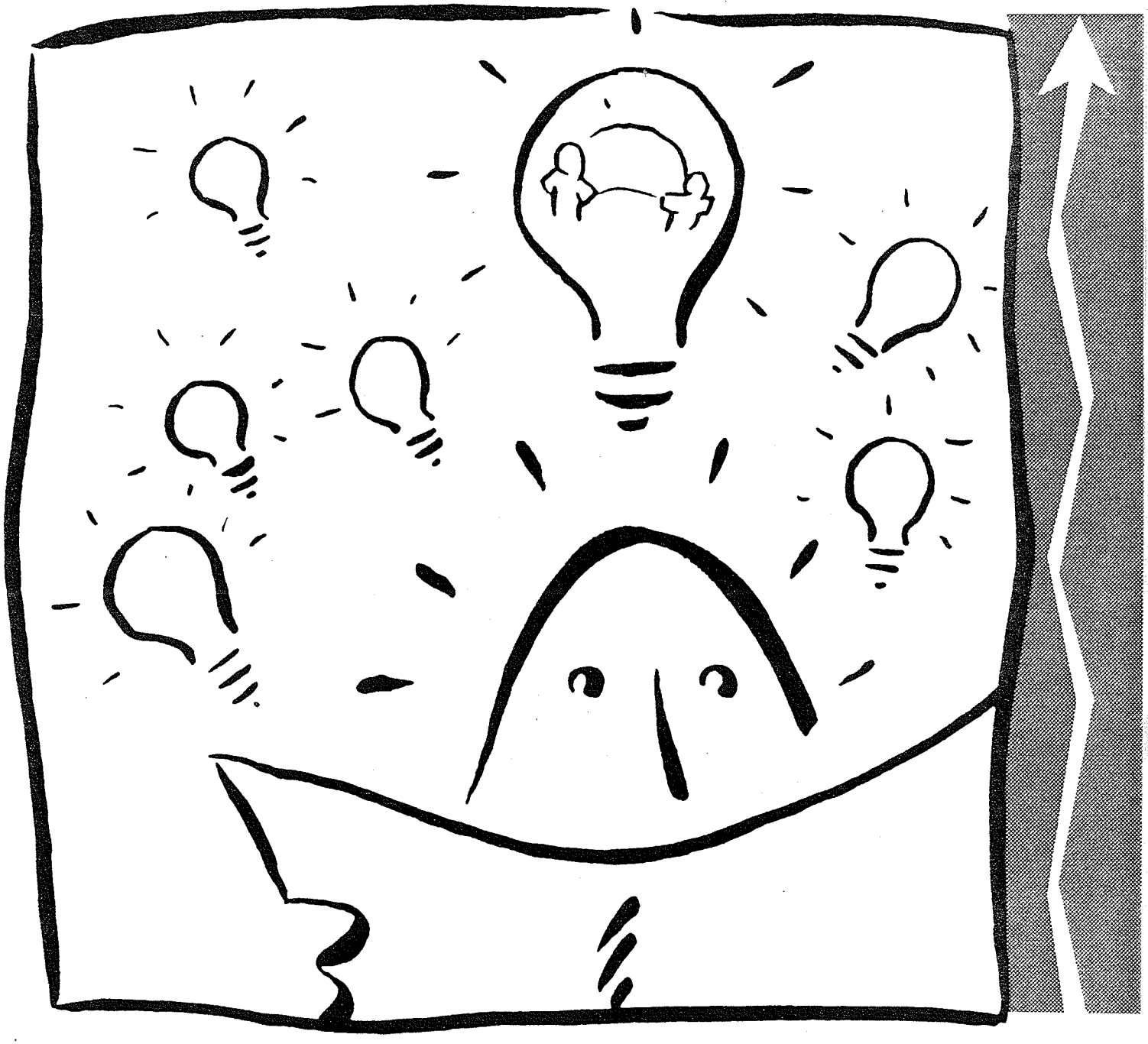
WORKSHEET FOR PLANNING

Objective	Task	Who	To be completed

STAY IN SCHOOL

NOTES:

RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS



RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS

RESOURCES

Resources available at your local Canada Employment Centre:

Minister of State for Youth, **Stay In School Information Kit.** (comes with audio-visual presentation and tool box manual)

Minister of State for Youth, **Stay In School, A Parent's Guide.**

Minister of State for Youth, **Straight Talk about Staying in School.**

An Inventory of Federal and Provincial Labour Market Programs and Services. (updated every 6 months)

OTHER RESOURCES

Canadian Association of Principals, **Stay In School Initiatives.**

Manitoba Education and Training, Native Education Branch, **A Parent's Guide to Help Children Succeed.**

The City of Winnipeg Parks and Recreation Dept., **Working with Volunteers.**

The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, **Working with Volunteer Boards.**

EXISTING GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Contact your local Canada Employment Centre for more information about some of the program ideas that other communities have successfully used. The Manitoba Department of Education and Training has established a branch which addresses leadership and programming issues for students at-risk of dropping out. It would be very useful to contact them when establishing prevention programs in your community's school.

Listed below are programs, support services available, and initiatives established by both the Federal and Provincial Governments.

The Stay In School Initiative

A five year long federally-funded program aimed at reducing the 30% drop-out rate in Canadian high schools. It was developed by the Minister of State for Youth and Employment and Immigration Canada.

The Stay In School Initiative has three components:

1. labour market programs and services for at-risk youth;
2. mobilization of stakeholders to develop solutions; and

3. public awareness and information material and activities.

It takes a preventative approach which is aimed particularly at those students most likely to drop out of school. In some situations, the government can provide assistance with advice, financial help and information to groups that want to work with young people.

Student Support Branch

The Student Support Branch was established:

1. to consolidate departmental services to students at risk throughout the province;
2. to collaborate with divisions and schools to develop school-based initiatives that promote the academic and social growth of students at-risk in 203 eligible schools throughout the province; and,
3. to improve schools' delivery of intervention and prevention programs that focus on instructional strategies, curriculum implementation, staff development, parent involvement, and the learning environment.

Staff at the branch can assist with the design of school and classroom programs through the provision of ongoing program development consultative services to schools, organizations and community agencies involved in the education of students at-risk.

START

START is a federal initiative which provides funding for employment programs and services for youth aged 12 to 18 years.

Co-operative Education

Co-operative Education offers a combination of work study experience for secondary and post-secondary students.

Career Week Information and Planning

A national week long series of events to keep young people informed about realistic career options and the importance of education in achieving their career ambitions. Canada Career Week is held the first week of November.

Stay In School Speakers Bureau

The bureau is an organization of local personalities, business people, Native and rural speakers who are available to speak to schools, business or organizations about the drop-out issue.

LINKING UP WITH STAY IN SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Information Kits

Stay In School information kits are available from Canada Employment Centres. They describe stay in school programs and initiatives.

CEC Program Officers

Canada Employment Centre Program staff can assist you in the organizational phase and provide information about what other stakeholder committees and schools are doing to address the drop-out issue in their communities.

Available Funding

Canada Employment Centre Program staff can provide your stakeholder committee with information about what funding is available for specific stay in school programs.